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JULY 8, 2002

art spiegelman

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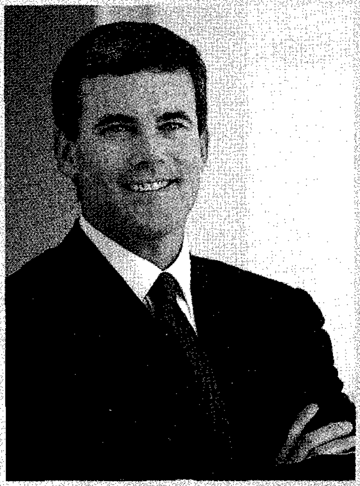

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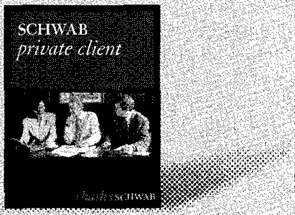

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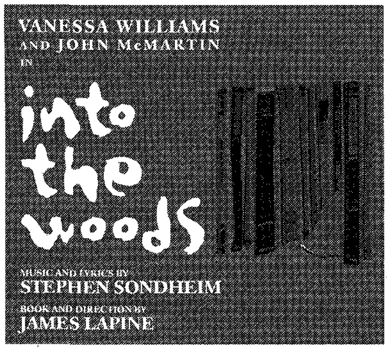

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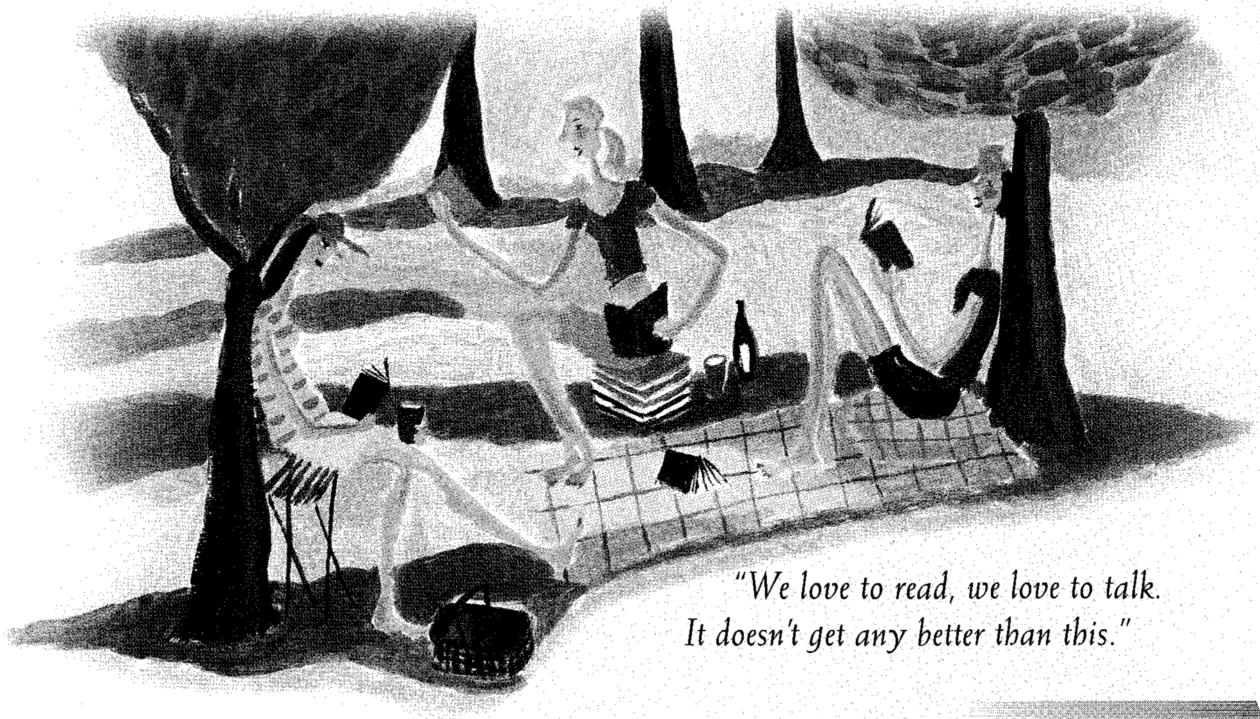
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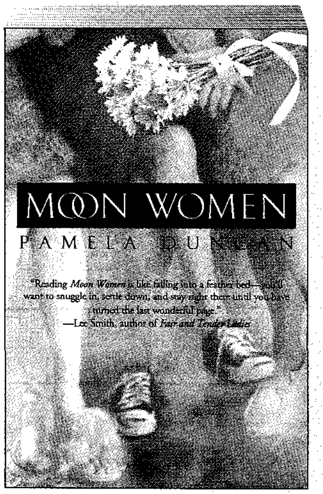
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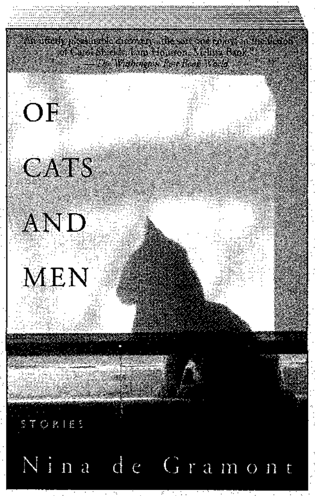
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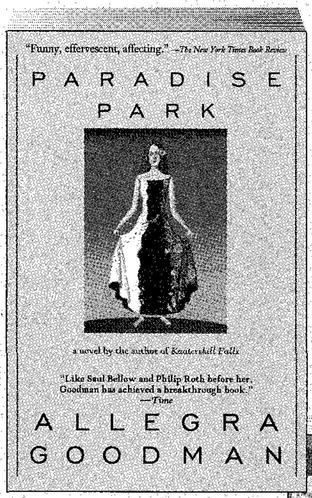
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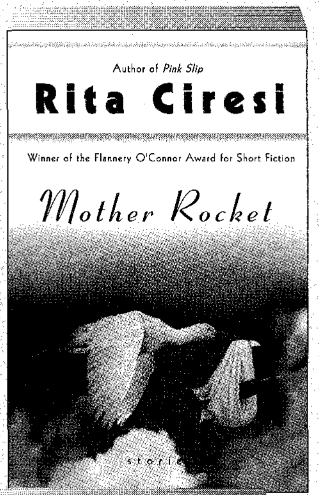
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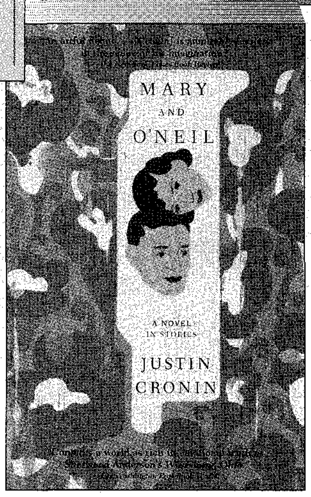
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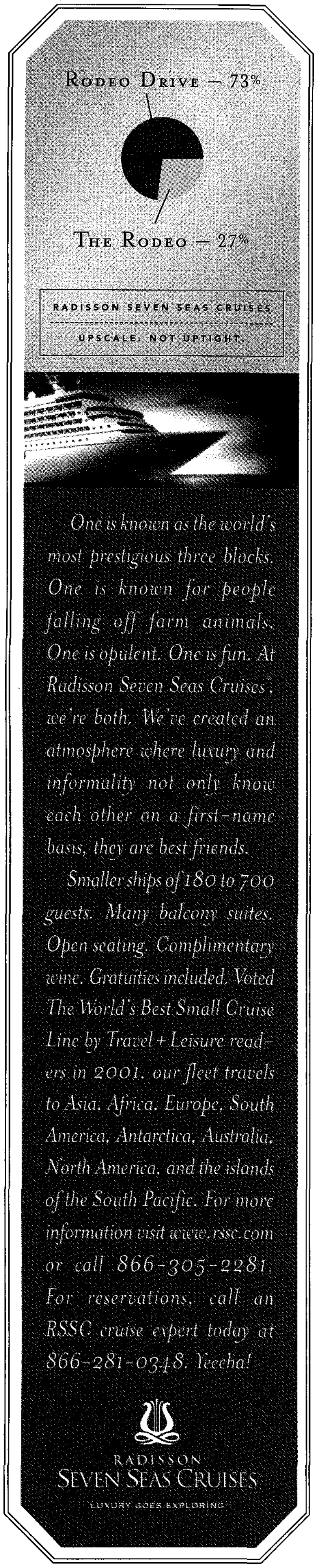
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CONTRIBUTORS

John Cassidy ("Yankee Imperialist," p. 40) is a staff writer. His first book, "Dot.Con," was published in February.

Alex Kotlowitz ("The Trenchcoat Robbers," p. 34) is the author of "There Are No Children Here" and "The Other Side of the River."

David Owen (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 33) has written several books about golf, including "The Making of the Masters" and "The Chosen One: Tiger Woods and the Dilemma of Greatness."

Elizabeth Kolbert (Comment, p. 23) is a staff writer who covers New York politics for the magazine.

Daniel Mendelsohn (Books, p. 75), who teaches in the Classics Department at Princeton University, is the author of a memoir, "The Elusive Embrace."

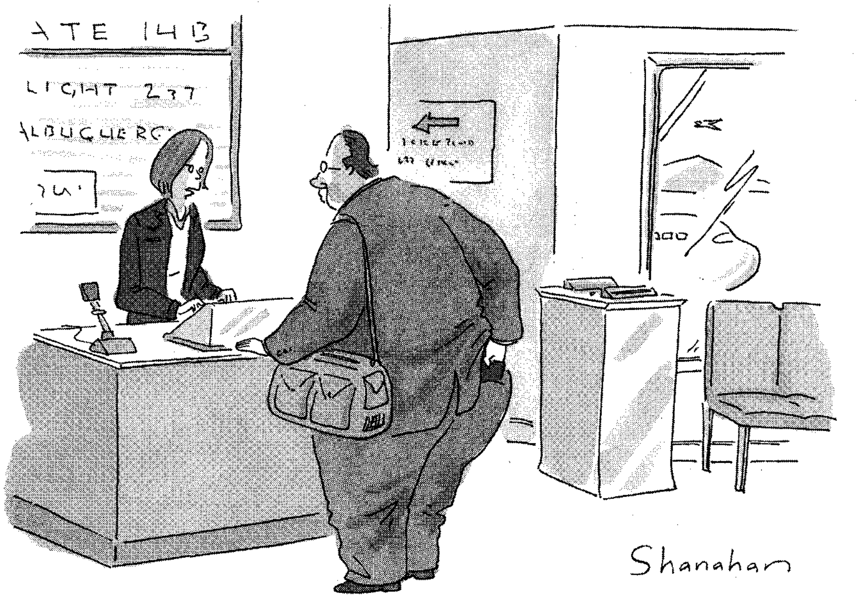
Louis Menand ("The Reluctant Memorialist," p. 54) is the author of "The Metaphysical Club," for which he won this year's Pulitzer Prize for History.

Tim O'Brien (Fiction, p. 66) will publish his seventh novel, "July, July," in the fall.

Mark Singer ("The Death Beat," p. 28) has published three books: "Funny Money," "Mr. Personality," and "Citizen K."

Susan Sheehan (Album, p. 60) has been contributing to the magazine since 1960. She is the author, with Howard Means, of "The Banana Sculptor, the Purple Lady, and the All-Night Swimmer."

Art Spiegelman (Cover) is working on a series of autobiographical comics broadsheets, "In the Shadow of No Towers," which will appear monthly in the *Forward* starting in September. ◆



"Of course, you get two bags of peanuts."

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THE MAIL

THE TRUE CHURCH

Like Thomas Keneally, I was a seminarian in the nineteen-fifties, in my case in Dublin, where I was ordained in 1961 ("Cold Sanctuary," June 17th & 24th). My experience, however, was very different from his. Back then, when I thought of the Church I never gave the prominence he did to popes, bishops, or priests. For me, to have left off becoming a priest because of any seminary rector or bishop would have been to confuse the real world with the ideal. My definition of the Church had more in common with Jesus' earthy parable of the field of wheat infested with weeds than with St. Paul's more exalted description of the Church as "glorious, with no spot or wrinkle . . . holy and faultless." If problems occurred, I told myself, I preferred to be a midwife to a new Church than a mortician of the old. The revelations of sexual abuse by priests, and the pitiable response of the bishops, offer a God-given opportunity for badly needed reform. This crisis will force everyone, especially the hierarchy, to take a new look at what it means to be a Church—to realize not only that the Church needs the people but that it *is* the people. Many of those in leadership positions have finally realized that the Church is much too important to be left to popes, bishops, or priests.

The Reverend Monsignor Peter A. O'Reilly
St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church
Westlake Village, Calif.

Keneally repeats some misconceptions shared by a number of "lapsed" Catholics. First, he assumes that his own largely negative experience with the Church—disliking his seminary training in Australia—is normative. Second, he describes practices as current that fell into disuse decades ago, such as the binding of a priest's hands at ordination. Third, he uncritically offers opinions about the Church as fact—for example, "I'm told," he writes, that seminaries are still "mutedly hysterical." Finally, despite countless healthy and generous priests, brothers, and sisters, he perpetuates the caricature of the cold, mean-spirited celibate. Certainly the Church is facing a crisis of historic proportions. And certainly lapsed Catholics can help the Church. But is it too much to ask that the analysis they offer be free of hearsay and stereotypes?

The Reverend James Martin, S.J.
New York City

The Church's failure to respond to child abuse among the clergy recalls the twelfth-century conflict between King Henry II of England and Archbishop Thomas Becket over whether clerics accused of crimes should be tried in royal courts (like most people) or in church courts. That today's Church, after the reforms of Vatican II, still protected its priestly abusers and thereby harmed many innocents indicates that Henry II was correct. The Church—like most organizations—is too likely to see its first duty as protecting its institutional interests and its officials, and can't be trusted to police itself.

Richard H. Levenson
New York City

Keneally refers to the early Catholic Church's "expansion in North America" in terms of Jesuits "martyred for the faith in their missions among Native American tribes." Yet the Church's history in the Americas began with the missionaries who accompanied Spain's conquistadores. The Dominican priest Bartolomé De Las Casas, a sixteenth-century witness, concluded that, in the New World, Indians were the real Christians and that Spaniards were the savages. In one incident, Hatuey, a Cuban chief about to be burned at the stake by priests, was implored to accept conversion so that he could enter Heaven. "No," he said. "I would only find more Christians there."

William Loren Katz
New York City

•

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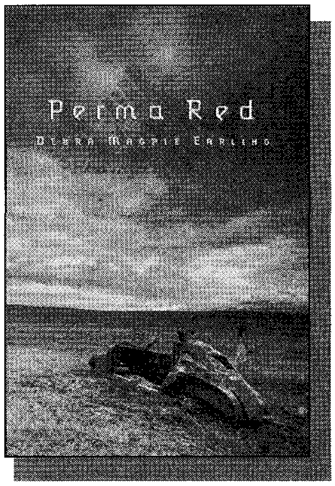

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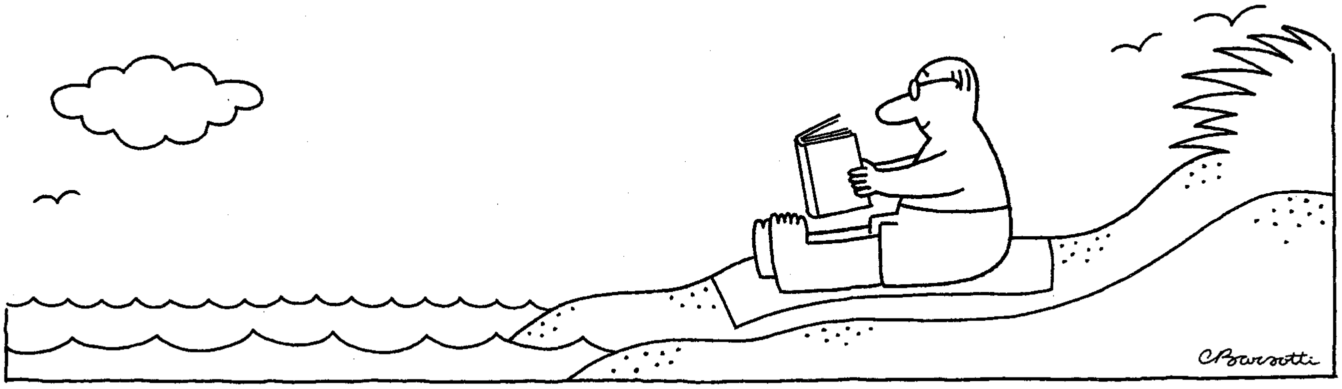

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
The Aquila Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's play is set in the twenties in Turkey. In previews. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 239-6200.)

HARLEM SONG
George C. Wolfe's latest is a musical history of Harlem show business from the nineteen-twenties to the present. Previews begin July 6. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

PACIFIC OVERTURES
The New National Theatre of Tokyo presents a staging of Stephen Sondheim's 1976 musical, as part of the Lincoln Center Festival. July 9 at 7. Continues through July 13. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

PLAY YOURSELF
Craig Lucas directs a New York Theatre Workshop staging of Harry Kondoleon's play, about an aging Hollywood actress. In previews. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
Kristen Johnston, Christopher Lloyd, Oliver Platt, Jimmy Smits, and Julia Stiles are in the New York Shakespeare Festival's first and only outdoor staging of the summer. Brian Kulick is the director. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ALL OVER
The wife (Rosemary Harris) and the mistress (Michael Learned) of a wealthy man come together at his deathbed, in Edward Albee's 1971 drama. Emily Mann is the director. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

CAPITOL STEPS:
WHEN BUSH COMES TO SHOVE
The Washington, D.C., comedy troupe returns to New York with their latest satirical revue. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

CHICAGO CITY LIMITS
The improv company presents a new revue, "Chicago City Limits' Director's Cut," which incorporates short films and videos. (Chicago City Limits Theatre, 1105 First Ave., at 61st St. 888-5233.)

ENDPAPERS
A drama by Thomas McCormack, former C.E.O. of St. Martin's Press, about the fallout that follows the retirement of the C.E.O. of a small, financially unstable publishing company. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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7	8	9				

FOOL FOR LOVE
Tim Corcoran's precise, insightful direction is the heart of this revival of Sam Shepard's 1983 play about a misbegotten love. The evening's power lies mainly in the monologues, which are superb. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 206-1515. Closes July 27.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's little-known 1848 play, set at a Russian country estate, stars Alan Bates as a down-on-his-luck gentleman living there and Frank Langella as his wealthy, arrogant neighbor. It becomes almost unnecessary for anyone else to be present, so completely do the two actors dominate the stage. Directed by Arthur Penn. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes July 21.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Edward Albee's ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband (Bill Pullman) for "cruising livestock." David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (4/15/02) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

HOUSE AND GARDEN
Alan Ayckbourn's linked plays "Garden" and "House" are set at the same time and place—a late-summer day, at an English country house—and they run simultaneously, with the same cast, on separate stages. (The actors have the unusual challenge of having to speed through the lobby in order to get to their places on each stage on time. But the audience sees no sign of this activity.) Most of the tiers of the English class system which you might expect to find at a country house are represented, so the plays are a sort of "Indoors, Outdoors" version of "Upstairs, Downstairs." It would have been interesting if our assumptions about the characters, based on what we saw in one play, were overturned or altered in some way when we saw the other, making us realize how little we know about people when we see them in only one context. But the surprises that do occur carry no psychological weight or emotional charge. All the care and professionalism lavished on making sure that this train runs on time can't alter the fact that it has no destination. John Tillinger is the director. (6/3/02) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 14.)

KAREN FINLEY
The performance artist presents a work in progress, "The Distribution of Empathy," which explores the emotions of New Yorkers after September 11th. Tuesdays at 9, through July 30. (Cutting Room, 19 W. 24th St. 691-1900.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

METAMORPHOSES
Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who has had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool. The production is fun and full of wonder, but it illustrates rather than dramatizes psychic struggle. The show's gimmick, the pool, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

MORNING'S AT SEVEN
Paul Osborne's 1939 back-porch drama is bland stuff, sort of Chekhov light, but the pleasing all-star cast puts this rickety workhorse through its paces. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes July 28.)

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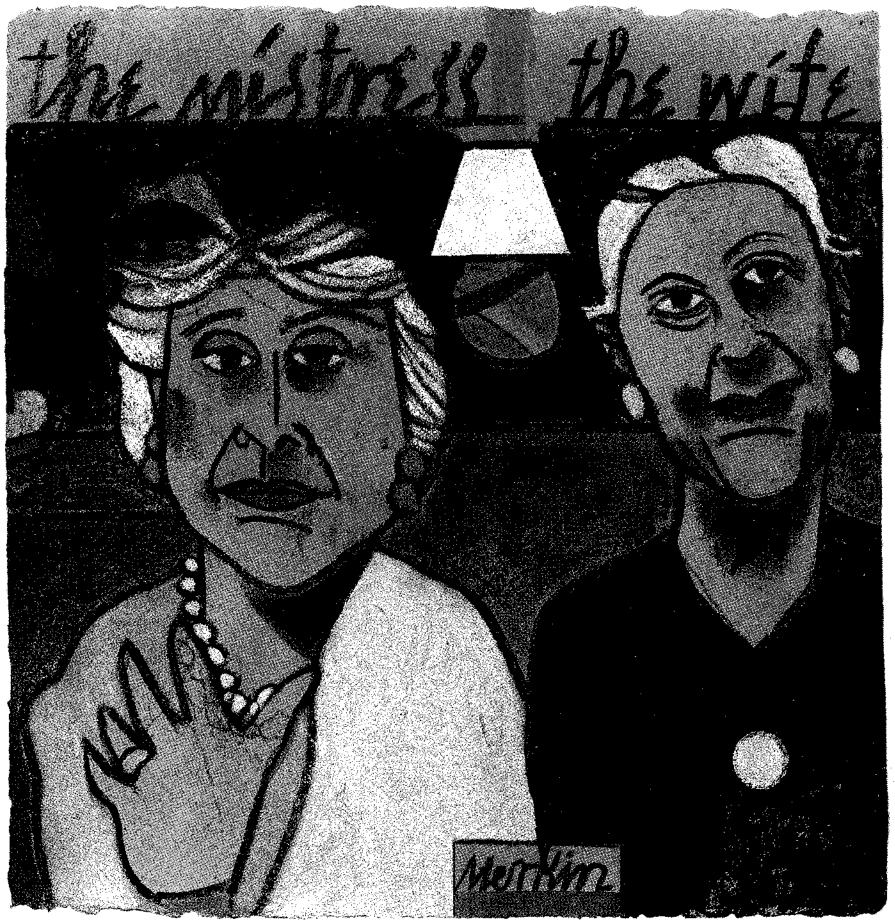


Michael Learned and Rosemary Harris, in Edward Albee's "All Over."

RICHARD MERKIN

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD
John Millington Synge's 1907 play, in a staging by the Irish Repertory Theatre. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

PRIVATE LIVES
In Noël Coward's comedy of bad manners, two wonderful actors, Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan, play the embattled exes Elyot and Amanda—dandies of detachment who jilt their new spouses and run away together to a Parisian love nest. Howard Davies's radical notion is to play Elyot and Amanda's physical passion for real. This allows him to capitalize on the wonderful chemistry between Rickman and Duncan, but it also throws the comedy weirdly off kilter. (5/6/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE
The monologuist known as Reno offers her thoughts on life in New York in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

RED HOT MAMA
Sharon McKnight portrays Sophie Tucker in a tribute to the vaudeville star. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave., at 48th St. 935-5820.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

SHOPPERS CARRIED BY ESCALATORS INTO THE FLAMES
Denis Johnson's dark comedy about a dysfunctional lower-middle-class family in Ukiah, California. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

THUNDER KNOCKING ON THE DOOR
Leslie Uggams and Chuck Cooper lead the cast of a musical set in rural Alabama in the sixties, written by Keith Glover (book) and Keb' Mo' and Anderson Edwards (music and lyrics). (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes July 28.)

21 DOG YEARS: DOING TIME@AMAZON.COM
Michael Daisey spent three years at Amazon during its headiest, do-no-wrong period. And now he's telling all. He's a charismatic performer, and up until the end, when he becomes a bit self-righteous, his show has the insightful hostility of the best comedy. The audience doesn't learn anything new about the dot-com bubble and its discontents, but it's fun to get the view from the inside. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

VIENNA: LUSTHAUS (REVISITED)
In this splendid revival of Martha Clarke's 1986 dance-theatre piece, inspired by the psychosexual steaminess of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a handsome troupe of dancers, sometimes clothed in the style of characters in a Schnitzler play, sometimes unclothed in the style of figures in a Schiele painting, enact various states of alienation and desire in a gauzy atmosphere charged with premonitions of the Second World War. Inexorably, the whole thing gets to you like a beautiful, bad dream. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

WHAT THE HELL'S YOUR PROBLEM: AN EVENING WITH DR. BOB NATHELSON
Tom Noonan's latest play, in which he portrays a television self-help guru whose books include one titled "You Made Your Parents Hate You." (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

NOISES OFF
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Final performances of the season. July 3 and July 6 at 2 and 8 and July 4-5 at 8: "Swan Lake." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

PILOBOLUS

For this summer engagement, the sextet (with its four storied artistic directors) brings three new works ("The Four Humours," "The Brass Ring," and "Ben's Admonition") and a selection of repertory. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. July 3, July 5, and July 8-9 at 8; July 4 at 5; and July 6 at 2 and 8.)

THE NEW YORK CITY TAP FESTIVAL

"Everybody's back," the producer Tony Waag says, about the second year of his festival. "Plus I've added more people." The lineup of a hundred and eighty-seven performers includes an impressive group of Americans—including Jimmy Slyde, Gregory Hines, and Savion Glover—as well as Estonians, Slovakians, Germans, and the French-Japanese combo Tapage, with Olivia Rosenkrantz and Mari Fujibayashi. "The foreigners may not do American funkiness so well," Waag says, "but they do something else, and after a while you start really liking it." Tapage's latest creation, "Sensemaya: Chant for Killing a Snake," is a bold and sexy interpretative dance to dramatic, Bernard Herrmann-ish music (by the Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas) for an orchestra of sixty-five. "Sometimes we are the hunter, and sometimes the snake," Rosenkrantz says. "So sometimes we go with the violins, and sometimes with the bassoons." (The Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St., near Broadway. 239-6200. July 6-14 at various times, and with a different program every night; for more information call 646-230-9564.)

"ROCK STARS NYC"

The producer and choreographer Skip Costa populates the old Show World strip club with another brand of dancing: an evening-length, Off Broadway rock concert with five bands, who perform a set each, and a troupe of thirty-some modern dancers, who perform throughout the evening. (671 Eighth Ave., at 42nd St. 802-7957. July 3 and July 5-6 at 8. Through July 19.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL

July 3-6 at 8 and July 7 at 2: Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. ♦ July 4-5 at 8:15, July 6 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 7 at 5: Big Dance Theater. The company's ingenious directors, Paul Lazar and Annie-B Parson, have updated Junichiro Tanizaki's 1933 tale of kinky, transcendent love, "Shunkin," by turning Shunkin—an impetuous, abusive, seductive, and blind musician—into a present-day rock star. They've added snatches of dialogue from rock documentaries where "people are behaving awfully and perversely," Lazar says, "but then go on to achieve something that the rest of us only aspire to." And Shunkin, played by three actress-dancer-singers in succession, including the adorably odd Gloria Deluxe front woman Cynthia Hopkins, now has a band. "The band hates her, she's completely shitty to them, and just when everybody's on the verge of tears or homicide," Lazar says, "they go into this sweet, sweet song that feels like the pure product of a harmony between them." Is it anything like the actor-director's own experience in the theatre? "I haven't consciously drawn that connection," Lazar says, "but I think there's something there." (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

POPA CHUBBY

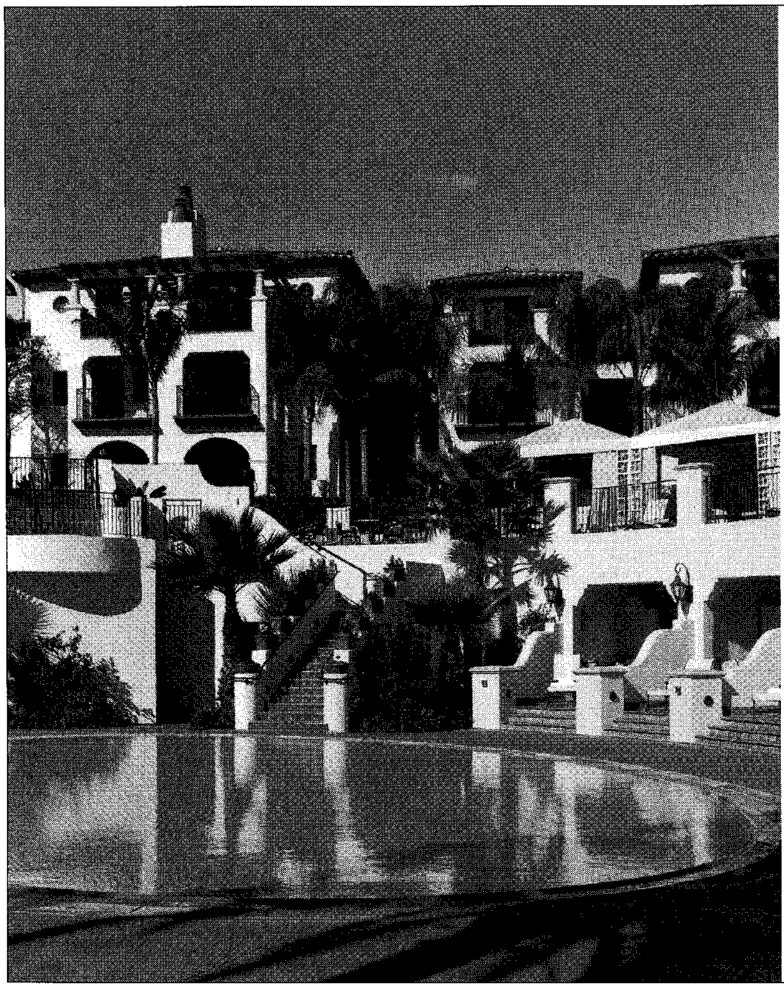
This Bronx-born blues guitarist (né Ted Horowitz) has a towering physique to match his stage name. Chubby, who earlier in his career toured with the punk innovator Richard Hell and during the nineties led the house band at the now defunct East Side juke joint Manny's Car Wash, is a proponent of what he calls the New York City blues. He breaks out his sleek fret work and rough-edged voice tonight to celebrate the release of his latest album, "The Good, the Bad, and the Chubby." (New York Blues Cruise, departing from Pier 16 at the South Street Seaport. 560-2583. July 3 at 7 and 9:30.)

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING

Dancing under the stars at Lincoln Center continues on July 3 with the Puerto Rican *bomba* and *plena* of the Bronx's **Los Pleneros de la 21.** July 4: The jazz vibraphonist **Roy Ayers** reconvenes his Ubiquity band for a night of seventies-era disco and funk. With the d.j. **Bobby Morales.** July 5: A night of Haitian rhythms with **Tabou Combo.** July 6: The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** may be led by one of the world's most famous jazz musicians, the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, but as impressive as he can be, especially when he's in the mood, he's hardly the whole show here. The L.C.J.O. comes stocked with eager and often inspired players including the trombonist Ronald Westray, the trumpeter Ryan Kisor, and the saxophonist Ted Nash. Marsalis talks about swing as if it were his personal mantra; at this for-dancers-only gig, he'll have the chance to prove that he and his top-of-the-line band have what it takes. July 9: With a program of Tommy Dorsey, Bobby Darin, and Count Basie standards, the New York-based **Gerard Carelli Orchestra** returns to the days of short ties and high-waisted pants. (For more information, call 721-6500. All shows are at 8, with dance lessons starting at 6:30.)

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL

Free concerts in lower Manhattan. July 4 at 2:30: The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** (see Midsummer Night Swing) offers an Independence Day show. (Battery Park. 835-2789.) July 5 at 6: **Great Big Sea**—four guys from Newfoundland and their mandolin, accordion, bass, and bodhran (a goatskin drum)—writes and performs revved-up pop and chanteys. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 732-7678.) July 5 at 6: The **New York Pops.** (Battery Park.) July 9 at 7: **Joan Osborne,** who discovered her voice at a



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bar's open-mike night, scored big seven years ago with "One of Us," a blasphemy-courting piece about the nature of the Creator. It won her a seat on the Lilith Fair bandwagon in the late nineties, but topping the success of her 1995 hit has eluded the Kentucky native. All the same, her barn-burning rasp and blues-based rock and roll remain a pleasure. (World Financial Center Plaza. 528-2733.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
The mostly free music series in Manhattan's back yard continues on July 4 at 3 with **Karl Denson's Tiny Universe.** The jazz saxophonist Denson, who contributed to the early albums of Lenny Kravitz (that solo on "Let Love Rule" belongs to him), was one of the founders of the early-nineties acid-jazz group the Greyboy Allstars. Since then Denson has grown increasingly funky, and with his Tiny Universe band he's turned his dedication to dance grooves into an underground success with jam-band fans across the country. July 7 at 3: The septuagenarian Algerian singer **Cheikha Rimitti,** who is known as the queen of *raï.* Sharing the bill is **P18,** a Parisian ensemble that grew out of the genre-fusing group Mano Negra, and the Malian singer **Issa Bagayogo.** (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
July 5 at 7:30: The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** (see Midsummer Night Swing). July 6 at 7:30: A night of smooth dance-hall reggae with **Everton Blender.** (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

MARC ANTHONY
Is there anything Anthony can't do? The singer, who was a major part of the Latin new wave in the nineties that invigorated salsa with an urban sting, has become one of the top-selling *salseros* of all time. He's also appeared on Broadway (O.K., that wasn't exactly a success, but the failure of "The Capeman" certainly wasn't Anthony's fault), and since the success of his self-titled English-language début, in 1999, he's become a bona-fide cross-over star thanks to his smoldering, substance-over-style approach. Expect a program of the unabashedly romantic radio-friendly pop that can be found on his new English-language release, "Mended." (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. July 7 at 7:30.)

POISON
The rock-and-roll glamour boys who rode to the top of the charts in the late eighties with the shameless song "Talk Dirty to Me" and the mawkish ballad "Every Rose Has Its Thorn" return with their Day-Glo spandex and hair-spray excesses. (Jones Beach Theatre. July 9 at 6.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—July 6: Peter Langland-Hassan achieves a distinctive guitar style by having a thumb so long it wraps around much of the fret board. His versatile melodies and the occasional call-and-response songs with buoyant lead singer Renee LoBue make the New York band **Elk City** an energetic and sophisticated live act. With the back-country ballads of **Canyon** and the Western-influenced Spanish-English musings of **Cordero,** which features former members of Man . . . or Astro-Man? and Rock*A*Teens. July 9: **Baby Steps,** a band led by the Loser's Lounge keyboardist and cultural archeologist Joe McGinty, shares a bill with the local alternative-pop trio **Nada Surf.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—July 5-6: The four-stringed Hawaiian instrument of Arthur Godfrey and Tiny Tim gets top billing at the second annual New Uke, New York Ukulele Festival. The first night starts with the duo of **Daria Klotz,** who can usually be found at the front of the local alternative-country band Kings County Queens, and **Matt Munisteri,** a veteran of the Flying Neutrinos and the leader of his own quartet, Brock Mumford. Rounding out the program are **Miss Ewa's Hawaiian Trio,** which specializes in the songs of the twenties, and **White Knuckle Sandwich,** which is known for tight harmonies and such eclectic instrumentation as the glockenspiel and the Slinky. The following evening belongs to **J. Walter Hawkes,** a trombonist from Mississippi who will be playing his uncle's 1927 Martin ukulele; the neo-folky **Buffalo and Starboy,** who will be joined by the twelve-year-old bluegrass prodigy Jack Dwyer on mandolin and guitar; and the ever-charming Hawaiian swing of the **Moonlighters.**

LUXX
256 Grand St., Williamsburg. (718-599-1000)—July 6: The **Post,** a three-piece band from Indiana, is adept at modifying traditional song structures to incorporate tape loops and atmospheric vocals. While the band does not yet sound fully comfortable in the studio, live it maintains an inventive groove quite successfully. Late nights on Saturdays this candy-colored club is home to **Berliniamsburg,** a party run by the veteran promoter Larry Tee, the one we have to thank for Ru Paul's "Supermodel (You Better Work)." It's the place for the nascent eighties-influenced dance music known as electroclash.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—July 5: The **Brothers Past** make earnest improvisational rock and roll that's heavy on group interplay. With the **All Mighty Senators,** a Baltimore, Maryland, outfit led by Landis Expandis. The six-foot-plus-tall singer and drummer performs with a special Pepto-Bismol-colored kit that allows him to play standing up. Expandis, who likes to dress as a superhero, cites as influences such luminaries as Spider-Man, Sun Ra, Bootsy Collins, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—July 3: A visit from the **Mahotella Queens.** This vocal trio first came together in the mid-sixties, and was for a long time the backing band for the singer Simon (Mahlatini) Nkabinde, the Lion of Soweto, who died three years ago. Backed by a tight band of young lads, the Queens carry on with their mastery of *mbaqanga,* the leg-shaking music of urban South Africa that they helped pioneer and is familiar to fans of Paul Simon's album "Graceland." Their show is as groovy and intricate as their traditional dress is colorful. July 4: **Basement Bhangra,** a long-running party featuring ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London.

POP NOTES

WRITING OUT LOUD
Three new releases highlight collaborations between rock performers and established writers.

On Warren Zevon's new album, **"My Ride's Here"** (Artemis), the longtime practitioner of sardonic rock-and-roll teams up with a host of big-name authors. The result, unfortunately, is not exactly Great Books material. The Carl Hiaasen collaboration "Basket Case" sinks as Zevon renders it with a detachment that borders on somnolence. The sportswriter Mitch Albom concocts a funny story for "Hit Somebody (The Hockey Song)," but Zevon sings as if he's sight-reading the lyrics. And Hunter S. Thompson's "You're a Whole Different Person When You're Scared" is a pat, limp gonzo tale. More successful are a pair of songs written with the poet Paul Muldoon, including the title track, a witty and powerful take on the inevitability of death.

Jim Roll, a singer-songwriter from Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a pair of albums to his name, raises his profile on his latest release, **"Inhabiting the Ball"** (Telegraph Company), by working with the writers Denis Johnson and Rick Moody. Roll's aching voice is a perfect match for Johnson's dark sensibility, and Moody leavens the album with such playful, romantic pieces as "In-Flight Magazines" and "Blue Guitar." Roll doesn't hand over the reins entirely: the catchy "Bonnie and Clyde" and the rollicking "Kicking at the Traces" are both originals that prove that he can get by without a little help from his friends.

The Texan singer and songwriter Alejandro Escovedo collaborated with three playwrights, Theresa Chavez, Eric Gutierrez, and Rose Portillo, for **"By the Hand of the Father"** (Texas Music Group), an album of songs taken from a musical-theatre piece about Mexican-Americans living in the United States during the twentieth century. The carefully honed pieces, decorated with accordion and string arrangements, take listeners on a journey through the heart-wrenching experience of the immigrant. And jubilant, rhythmic songs such as "Mexico Americano" are suffused with joy.

—John J. Donohue

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through July 3 and July 5-7: The **Count Basie Orchestra.** The Count himself and the star soloists and arrangers who brought the Basie band fame are a distant memory, but as long as the ensemble, now under the direction of Grover Mitchell, keeps its brass barking and the rhythm airborne, the legacy of Kansas City swing is still intact.

DANNY'S
346 W. 46th St. (265-8133)—July 6-7: **Blossom Dearie,** she of the porcelain voice and huge interpretive skills, continues to knock them dead in her own quietly effective way. This treasured veteran knows her way around standards both shopworn and contemporary, enlivening everything she touches with just the right blend of pathos, wit, and stiletto-sharp swing.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through July 7: The **Mark Whitfield** organ trio. Electric guitar goes with the Hammond organ like pulled pork goes with coleslaw, and now Whitfield, who has a world of jazz and blues licks at his fingertips, makes a go of the time-honored combination. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—There's been no shortage of bebop-besotted trumpeters over the past two decades; some of the more promising are being featured at a brass mini-festival this week. July 3: **Terell Stafford** has come far since he was the second horn in Bobby Watson's Horizon quintet. July 5: **Jeremy Pelt,** who leads his own quintet here, is more of an unknown quantity, although he acquitted himself well at a Lincoln Center trumpet blowout last year. July 6-7: **Brian Lynch's** lack of fame is inversely related to his talent and experience; he's long fortified the bands of such jazz and Latin figureheads as Phil Woods and Eddie Palmieri, and he certainly deserves a hearing of his own.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—July 5-6: The first generation of Jimmy Smith's keyboard progeny is rapidly thinning, but **Jimmy McGriff** is still with us. He makes the Hammond B-3 organ moan with eloquence.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through July 7: The **Gary Bartz** quintet. The fallow years of the eighties are a long-ago memory for this brilliant, fully rejuvenated alto and soprano saxophonist, who is probably best known for his early-seventies stint with Miles Davis. Bartz is playing even better than he did then, having traded in his dalliances with funk fusion for serious modal-bop improvising. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

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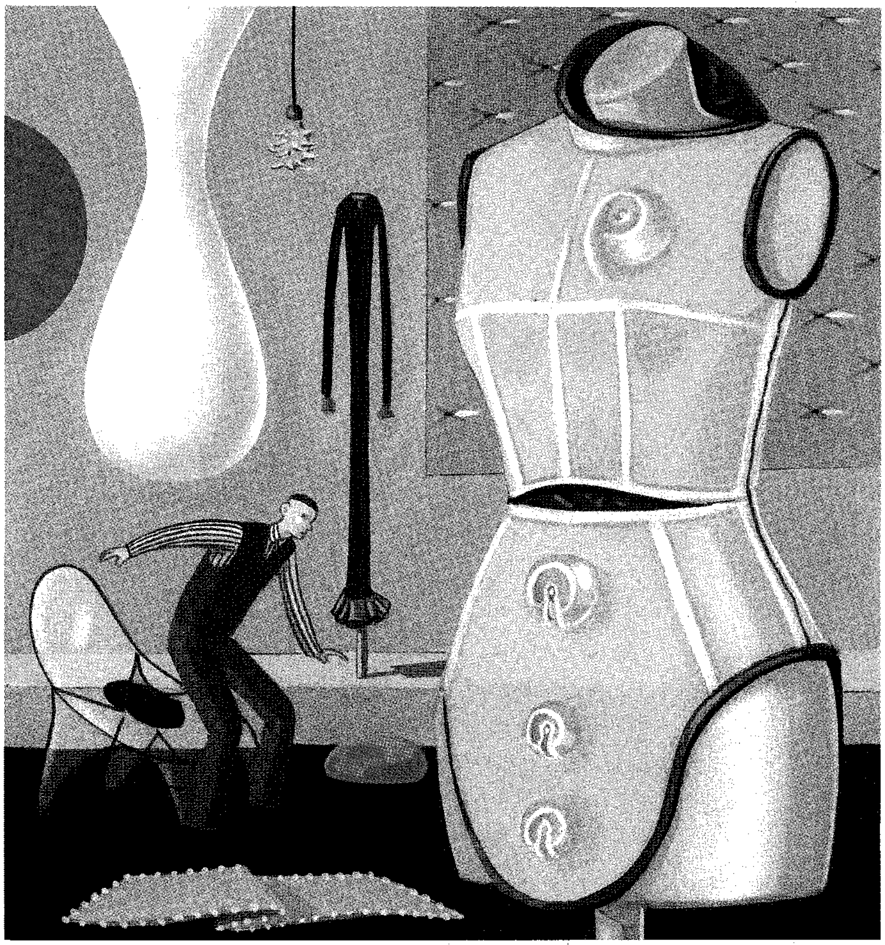
ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—The title of the city's first Paul Gauguin show in forty years, **"Gauguin in New York Collections: The Lure of the Exotic,"** seems to apply equally to the artist's histrionic life and the passion of New Yorkers for his work. This show makes a case for both, and the sixty drawings, paintings, and sculptures from the museum's collection, doubled with loans from private sources, dutifully trace the development of the Fauvist self-promoter chronologically, from stockbroker in Paris to cagey mystic fantasist in Tahiti. Through Oct. 20. ♦ Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), perhaps the greatest American artist before Abstract Expressionism, was American by the usual test: he couldn't have been anything else. The same might be said of his art, which is styleless. There is no Eakins look, only a distinctive pitch of ambition and excellence. A magnificent retrospective, originally organized by the curator Darrel Sewell for the Philadelphia Museum of Art, endorses the opinion of the artist's older friend and hero Walt Whitman: "Eakins is not a painter, he is a force." Cannily intermingled paintings, photographs, drawings, sculptures, and miscellaneous artifacts—such as grisly casts taken from parts of dissected cadavers—reveal the artist as a yeoman genius, strenuous in all things. Eakins made aesthetics sweat. It is astonishing how contemporary he feels today. Through Sept. 15. ♦ **"New York, New York: Photographs from the Collection"** offers a sedate, charming tour through our grandparents' Manhattan, from an eerily unrecognizable Washington Square to a spindly, spanking-new Ninth Avenue El. In true Met style, the show feels a little conscientious and dry, weighted toward classic images like Steichen's misty Flatiron Building or Hine's lone steelworker shimmying up a cable. Viewers with archival and architectural appetites will feast quietly. People persons, however, would do better to walk a few blocks to the Jewish Museum's survey of street photography. Through Aug. 25. ♦ **"Adrian: American Glamour,"** an exhibition of the designs of Gilbert Adrian (1903-59), at the Costume Institute. Through Aug. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City. (708-9480)—Dubbed MOMA QNS, the museum's temporary quarters in a big, blue renovated factory building near the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge are easy to get to, excitingly well designed, and, in its first shows, frantically entertaining. Say the name: "Momakins." Such youth-mongering cuteness befits a racy display of six classic automobiles from the museum's heretofore little-celebrated car collection and **"Tempo,"** a festivalist fun park dominated by conceptual and video installations on the alleged theme of time. Apart from gimmicky stuff with clocks and metronomes, the latter show suggests a transatlantic annex of the current Documenta in Germany with politically tinged works from Africa, Asia, and South America. Meanwhile, "Starry Night," "Demoiselles," and other jewels of the permanent collection get a chance in coarse, cold rooms to prove how tough they are. Don't miss the bookstore and the café. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—For **"Connecting Museums,"** a collaborative exchange and exhibition series sponsored by the Guggenheim, the Hermitage, and Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, the museum displays three portraits from the combined reserves: a Rembrandt (his framer's wife), a Velázquez infanta, and a Manet (a woman, from behind, in the mirror). Through Oct. 20. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Joan Mitchell, the long-underrated second-generation Abstract Expressionist who died in 1992 at her expatriate home near Monet's Giverny, spoke paint. A sumptuous retrospective confirms her as a major artist. Mitchell's varieties of abstract landscape conjure nature (including the difficult human kind, in ornery and exacerbated moods) out of pigmented stuff with authoritative abandon. Lessons of Pollock, de Kooning, and, yes, Monet are apparent but thoroughly subsumed. As with great Monets, you sometimes can't tell what you are looking at. It's paint, sure, but as a medium of metaphysical mystery. Certain paintings seem to be at once all wall and all window. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)


ALISON SEIFFER

"Skin: Surface, Substance, and Design," at Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Star Wars: The Magic of Myth"** adds many artifacts from the original trilogy (and first prequel) to a well-attended travelling exhibition that opened at D.C.'s National Air and Space Museum in 1997. Through July 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (288-6400)—**"Banaras: The Luminous City,"** a two-part show devoted to the ancient Indian destination, opens quietly with a small selection of black-and-white photographs. The largely nineteenth-century selection tends toward contemplative landscape; one standout in the contemporary offerings is Linda Connor's gold-toned portrait of a yogi doing a headstand on the banks of the Ganges at dawn. Across the hall, an interactive and carnivalesque multimedia installation touts the city's cultural and religious heritage. The information comes in elaborately digitized gadgets like the bicycle wheel whose spokes play random ragas or the electronic son-et-lumière egg that gamely tries to demystify death. Through Aug. 18. ♦ **"Through Afghan Eyes: A Culture in Conflict, 1987-1992."** In the eighties, a group of Afghan journalists were trained by the United States Information Agency, then spread out through their war-torn county to document the struggle against the Soviet occupation. Their photography is depressingly familiar—men with Kalishnakovs delicately set in front of their prayer rugs, dirty children with decorated guns—but the video footage is engaging and surprisingly wonderful. One shows a group of men playing *buzkashi*—an oddly graceful desert-bound blend of tag and polo in which the person who's it carries a goat carcass around on a horse. The most affecting of the video works shows a man billed as "The Afghan Comic." He begins with a character who's like an Afghan Charo—lots of jiggling and high-pitched coochie-coos—then with the stump of his left leg he begins to shoot at imaginary enemies. Through Sept. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—The ambitious if scattershot **"Skin: Surface, Substance, and Design"** makes a case for skin-deep design, showcasing objects from the past five years which traffic in ideas about membrane and surface. Fashion and furniture are well represented (there's even a blue nylon windbreaker that doubles as an inflatable chair), but the curator, Ellen Lupton, casts a wide net, presenting contributions from disciplines as diverse as biotechnology (a fascinating sampling of artificial skin and cartilage) and filmmaking (clips of movies from "Frankenstein" to "Aliens"). Sometimes this pluralism is stretched too thin, as with a visually tepid shelf of "cosmeceuticals," skin-care products packaged to resemble medical supplies. Through Sept. 15. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—The typically obsessive collector of the sixteenth century had a name for his wonderfully jumbled private collection: cabinet of curiosities. **"The Public's Treasures: A Cabinet of Curiosities from the New York Public Library"** pays homage to this omnivorous spirit with an exhibition of its own store of literary miscellany. There are cases full of odd erotica, censored books, miniature books, pop-up books, even a piece of paper made from carrots. But the

real glory is the personal memorabilia. A lock of Walt Whitman's hair, Virginia Woolf's walking stick, Percy Bysshe Shelley's baby rattle, lead pencils made by Henry David Thoreau—browsing through this charming hodgepodge feels like rifling through boxes in some vast collective attic. Through Aug. 24. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The seven artists in **"Heart of Gold: Capitalism"** explore the relationship between commerce and aesthetics with mixed success. Chris Doyle gilds the gritty steps to the Williamsburg Bridge (three deadpan photos document the process); Peter Walsh offers "Hoard," an annotated bibliography of how society creates value (entries range from Mr. Peanut to P. T. Barnum, and free copies are available). A disproportionate amount of gallery space is devoted to "Climatex Lifecycle," a biodegradable commercial textile (artist Hope Ginsburg works in the company's marketing department). Worms transform remnants into compost near a pair of benches upholstered with the no-fun reminder "food = waste." Through Sept. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

CLIFFORD ODETS
The playwright once said of his work in the movies, "I took my filthy salary every week and rolled an inner eye around an inner landscape." Now that private world is on public display in this show of eclectic paintings on paper (none larger than fifteen by eleven inches) from the forties and fifties. Odets was an avid collector, and his art-historical smarts are in evidence as he shifts gears from German Expressionism, on display in a garish portrait of a jowly cleric, to an apocalyptic scene with faceless figures and a cold full moon straight out of de Chirico. Through Aug. 2. (Michael Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.)

NAM JUNE PAIK
The pioneer of multimedia installation has parked a fleet of classic cars, all painted silver, around a thirties-era radio tower, which is subject to hourly transmissions of laser beams ricocheting off nearby mirrors. The interiors of the cars are rigged with old hi-fis and stereos, all of which play Mozart, creating a sweeping nostalgia for bygone visions of the whiz-bang future. (30 Rockefeller Plaza.)

"COMING TO LIGHT"
Starting in the summer of 1957, three old friends—Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, and Milton Avery—began spending the summer in Provincetown. Do the paintings they made in the following years show a renewed sense of mutual influence? It's an appealing thought, but most of the works here, a mix of august canvases and nimble watercolors, show the three artists moving in disparate directions. Avery grows ever more childlike and lyrical, Gottlieb plugs away at his trademark nuclear ideographs, and Rothko, whose works are the show's centerpiece, switch-hits between horizontal and vertical condensations of gorgeous dourness. Through Aug. 15. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

Short List

JOHN GRAHAM
York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155.
Through July 31.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ALICIA MC CARTHY
The San Francisco artist (or more specifically "Mission School" artist, after the area where many of her street installations have taken place) works in a scrappy and communitarian style. Her sprawling installation, which uses big wooden constructions, delicate gouaches, and assemblages of thistles, feathers, and stones, functions both as a series and as a single work. Especially effective is her quixotic "wall of friendship," with its hundred and sixty-three works by eighty-nine artist pals hanging in messy proximity. Naturally, the individual pieces are stylistically various, but the vibe is so integrated that the wall serves as a cozy portrait of McCarthy's coterie. Through July 20. (Rare, 435 W. 14th St. 645-5591.)

"NIGHT VISION"
The exhibition, organized by painter Joy Garnett, addresses the shadowy power fantasies lurking in surveillance, combat, and research gadgetry, but with such a broadly defined topic Garnett has a hard time zeroing in on her target. Skip the uninspired video and software works. What's intriguing is how good old-fashioned figurative painting seems to have the edge in creating variations on techno-imagery. Spooky, sexy canvases by Adam Hurwitz, Jonathan Podwil, and Garnett herself suggest a promising new kind of "Digital-Realist" attitude. Through July 20. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 924-4212.)

Short List

TONY GRAY
Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070.
Through July 28.

JOAN MITCHELL
Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 242-7727.
Through Aug. 18.

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GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

"INFOTECTURE"
The smallest piece here is probably the summer's tiniest art work: Ken Goldberg and Karl Bohringer provide a microscope for those who wish to see their renderings of Fallingwater, scratched into silicon at the scale of hundredths of an inch to a foot. The Bureau of Inverse Technology, whose name sums up the show's whimsical treatment of high tech, sent a twenty-inch remote-control plane, or "spy drone," on recognizance missions over Silicon Valley and Seattle corporate campuses. The best work at the gallery is almost medieval: the interlinked paper domes of Kendall Buster's "Parabiosis" (you can stick your head inside them) feel like a Noguchi lampshade version of Moscow's St. Basil's Cathedral. Through July 13. (Artists Space, 38 Greene St. 226-3970.)

Short List

TYYNE ESKO
Luise Ross, 568 Broadway. 343-2161.
Through July 26.

ELLSWORTH KELLY
Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.
Through July 24.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DANA BUCKLEY
Cuba's decrepit mansions, sparkling '57 Chevys, cigar-smoking grandmothers, and laughing schoolkids attract photographers; Buckley transcends the clichés more than most. Images such as a field of royal palms seen through a rainstorm or a simply framed forties-era photograph hung on a wall quietly convey both the Cuban people's singular history and their current quandary. Through July 12. (Connors-Rosato, 39 Great Jones St. 473-0377.)

ERIC FISCHL
The eighties art star lifted not just figures but whole compositions from these snapshots, which he took in Saint-Tropez. In one scene, a topless sunbather runs lotion up the inner thigh of the prone body next to her; in another, a Speedoed father carries his naked daughter through the sand. The abundance of offhand nudity conspires to make the occasional clothed subject, including one relatively prim woman concentrating on her makeup, seem quaint and strangely fascinating. Through July 31. (Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.)

RON GALELLA
Many of the images here show celebrities hiding, running, glaring, yelling, or raising a hand in the unmistakable pose that says, "No more pictures!" Galella photographed Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis doing all of these—even as she swam away from him in Italy—and in the process set up the shift from paparazzi to stalkerazzi. It's hard to tell if he derived pleasure from hounding these celebrities, who manage to appear momentarily as if they don't crave attention, but it's impossible to deny that powerful photographs come from the hostile exchanges. Through Aug. 2. (Paul Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave. 563-4474.)

KATHLEEN JOHNSON
The L.A. artist Kathleen Johnson uses disposable underwater cameras to explore the shallows of white-walled pools native to Californian back yards. The large panorama prints focus on the steps that lead into and out of the water and on the shimmery white light in the blue, blue water that slides over the rounded edges of the underwater architecture. Unlike Ed Ruscha's deadpan series on California pools, Johnson's images take you down into the water and leave you there, breathing easy. Through Aug. 9. (Lucas Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 243-3159.)

DANNY LYON
Danny Lyon, who's best known for his work from the civil-rights era and his insider's look at the Chicago Outlaw Motorcycle Club, shows recent photographs made on the Rocky Boy, Blackfoot, Rosebud, and other Indian reservations. In many of these everyday scenes—a family at the dining table, a game of horseshoes—one subject or another holds a fresh Polaroid. This evidence of their involvement in the process explains why Lyon's images have so much more vitality and honesty than the famously posed and propped portraits that Edward S. Curtis took of Native Americans at the turn of the century. Through July 19. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

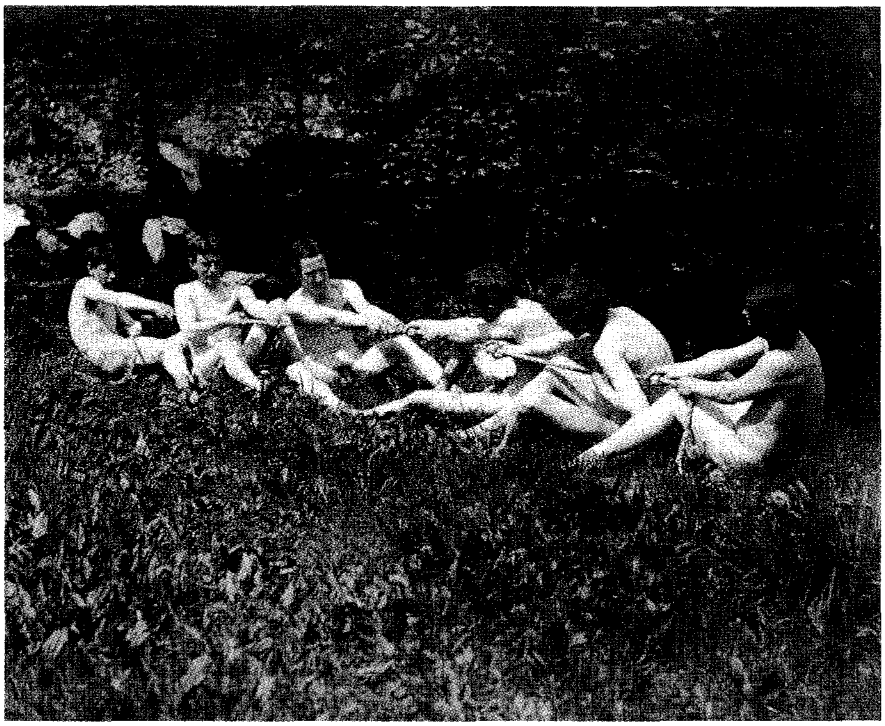
RUSS MEYER
The eighty-year-old director of such rambunctiously silly cult films as "Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!" and "Mondo Topless" did some pinup photo work back when the bosoms favored for that sort of thing were pendulous, not pneumatic. The Technicolor blowups collected here look more gently domestic than you'd expect. In fact, on the prurience meter, Meyer's work is completely outstripped by a nearby light table loaded with hundreds of slides of the performance artist Annie Sprinkle engaged in the most oddball varieties of hard-core porn—in the name of art, of course. Through July 27. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

LARRY SILVER
Teasing black-and-white pictures of suburban ennui taken by this Photo League veteran after he moved to Westport, Connecticut, in 1973. Silver, who first came to fame in the fifties with his photographs of Muscle Beach in California, concentrates here on more prosaic, less inflated subjects—swing sets, boarded-up beach houses, baseball games, and campgrounds. This work is much quieter than Silver's early stuff; now when people are present, they're almost always alone in either a cramped or an endless landscape. But you leave feeling pretty sure that contemporary hot-shot scenarist Gregory Crewdson has learned a few tricks from this Connecticut chronicler. Through July 27. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.)

"THE ANTIQUARIAN AVANT-GARDE"
The artists in this show have rejected digital trickery and returned to nineteenth-century processes, in photography's answer to the early-music movement. The most exhilarating pictures here, a nude by Jayne Hinds Bidaut and a triptych by France Scully Osterman, sound labor-intensive: Bidaut used a "unique in-camera dryplate tintype," Osterman chose a "ruby and relievo ambrotype." Sally Mann offers a tea-toned print made with a "wet plate collodion glass negative," and Chuck Close and Adam Fuss contribute daguerreotypes. Through Aug. 9. (Sarah Morthland, 511 W. 25th St. 242-7767.)

"BUGS, WEEDS, AND ZOOBABIES"
The tony John Stevenson gallery offers a selection of flora and fauna photographs that would go nicely with chintz. Linda Broadfoot's Polaroid-based prints render such insects as the Spanish moon moth in pastel colors on a yellow background and echo prints from the time before photography. Archetypal still-lifes and closeups of "Provençal Thistle" and "Clover Blossom," by Cy DeCosse, take advantage of the tonal qualities of photogravures and platinum prints. But Michael O'Neill's "zoobabies" are the overwhelming sentimental favorites. Only a real grouch could keep from cooing over the baby gibbon or the tiny potbellied pig. Through Aug. 10. (338 W. 23rd St. 352-0070.)

"CHILD LABOR AND THE PICTORIALIST IDEAL"
This fascinating show of vintage photographs contrasts Lewis Hines's investigative portraits of American child laborers with romantic depictions of childhood taken by six pictorialist photographers, including Edward Weston and Alfred Stieglitz, from 1890 to 1925. Hines's hard-bitten newsies, oyster shuckers, and mill workers are captured in unarguably harsh conditions. But his subjects often show an exuberance that's lacking in their carefully staged, hazily lit counterparts (cf. Clarence White's allegorical scene of Pan at his pipes or Gertrude Käsebier's idylls of mother and child). Through July 13. (Grey, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780.)



"Male Nudes in a Seated Tug-of-War," photographed by Thomas Eakins, at the Met.

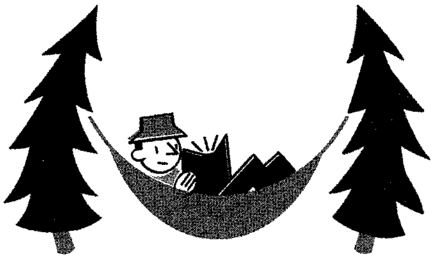
GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

PLUS ULTRA
It's cheeky to mount a show called "Tract: Systemic Sprawl" in the pocket-sized Plus Ultra space. But curators Amanda Church and Courtney J. Martin interpret their key words loosely: the five abstract paintings and one small installation by five young artists address not only suburban tracts but also biological and metaphorical systems. "Sprawl" may summon visions of hideous strip malls, but several interpretations are notably benign and refreshing: Rachel Urkowitz's paintings of shadows in Monet's garden at Giverny are coolly serene, and Louis Cameron's untitled installation of little mirrored tiles under spotlighting could easily double as sunlight glinting across breeze-ruffled water. Through July 21. (235 S. 1st St., Williamsburg. 718-387-3844.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Last Resorts

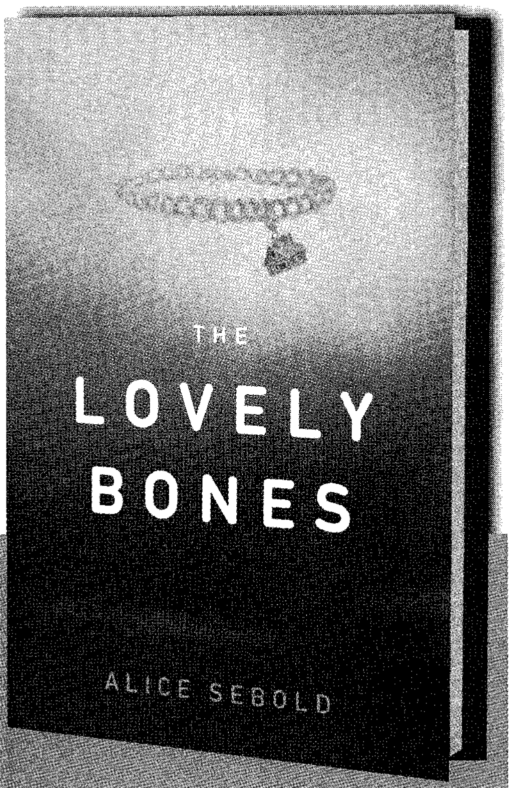
The world's first milk line, the Midland Railroad, ran from New York to the Catskill foothills in 1870. According to **IN THE CATSKILLS** (Columbia), a collection of writings about the region edited by Phil Brown, the train was largely responsible for the influx of middle-class Jewish families into the area's dairy farms. Brown's anthology examines the area's religious and ethnic dynamics, from an "anti-Hebrew crusade" in 1889 to the emergence in the nineteen-forties of a bungalow community that became known as the Borscht Belt. A history of another favorite family destination, Lawrence Squeri's **BETTER IN THE POCONOS** (Penn State), also focusses on resort spots made accessible by public transportation—"gravity" railroads gave New Yorkers a chance to visit the Pennsylvania mountains and resorts with names like Paradise Stream, Vacation Valley, and Pocono Hay-Ven.



STEPHEN SAVAGE

During the fifties, three young writers beat lonely retreats to Washington's North Cascades; the photographer John Suiter's **POETS ON THE PEAKS** (Counterpoint) chronicles the "rucksack revolution" summers of Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Jack Kerouac, each of whom worked as fire lookouts among the mountain hemlock and western red cedar. To get there, they needed more than a station wagon: Snyder travelled to his cabin outpost by way of funicular, tugboat, skyhook crane (which hoisted him to the top of the Ross Dam), and then a day's walk through the woods. Kerouac spent weeks reading the Diamond Sutra and writing poems. He remarked on the calm of the Japanese haiku poets, who "live in what they call 'Do-Nothing-Huts' and are sad, then gay, then sad, then gay, like sparrows and burros and nervous American writers."

—*Lauren Porcaro*



"If you only read one book this summer, read THE LOVELY BONES by Alice Sebold." —Anna Quindlen

"A keenly observed portrait of familial love and how it endures and changes over time.... It is also a deeply affecting meditation on the ways in which terrible pain and loss can be redeemed—slowly, grudgingly, and in fragments—through love and acceptance. Ms. Sebold's achievements: her ability to capture both the ordinary and the extraordinary, the banal and the horrific, in lyrical, unsentimental prose; her instinctive understanding of the mathematics of love between parents and children; her gift for making palpable the dreams, regrets and unstilled hopes of one girl and one family."

—Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"Heaven is a place where artful little books are as big as this....Somehow this is a mystery, a family drama, and an inspirational story.... And somehow it is told from heaven, without sentimentality."

—Janet Maslin

"Memorable; painfully funny, bracingly tough, terribly sad, it is a feat of imagination."

—Michael Chabon

"Sebold has given us a fantasy-fable of great authority, charm, and daring. Alice Sebold is a one-of-a-kind writer."

—Jonathan Franzen

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Read an Excerpt Online at www.twbookmark.com AOL KEYWORD: Lovely Bones

Short List

KAREN HALVERSON
Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 741-4764. Through July 6.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Asia Society.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

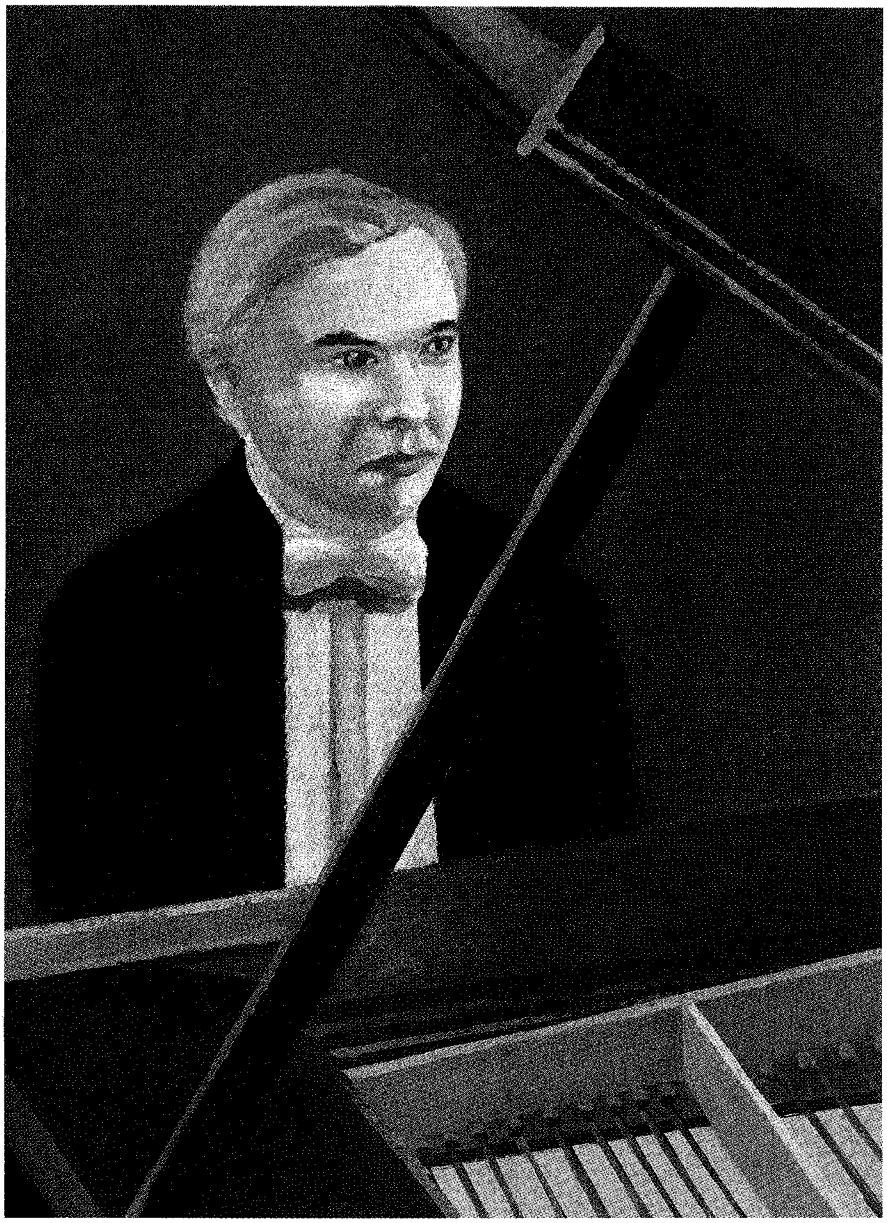
OPERA

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA
Now that Vincent La Selva, the music director of the New York Grand Opera, has finished his eight-year survey of the complete Verdi operas, he can move on to another of his loves: Puccini, three of whose operas he presents this summer. Unlike the Met's summer operas, La Selva's presentations are fully staged, and, even if he lacks that company's deep pockets and high production values, he makes up for it with the passion and authority of his conducting. He begins with **"Manon Lescaut,"** a parable of doomed love and downward mobility set during the ancien régime; its locales stretch from a sumptuous Parisian salon to what the composer's librettists called "a vast desert near the outskirts of New Orleans." The soprano Maria Knapik and the tenor Edward Perretti sing the roles of the luxe-loving Manon and her lover Des Grieux; the director is Roberto Stivanello. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 3 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

OPERA FESTIVAL OF NEW JERSEY
July 5 at 8 and July 9 at 7:30: **"The Barber of Seville,"** with Margaret Lattimore, Daniel Belcher, Jesús Garcia, and Kevin Glavin; the conductor is Bernard Labadie. ♦ July 6 at 8: Britten's **"The Rape of Lucretia,"** with Phyllis Pancella (making her début, in the title role), David Adam Moore, and Scott Altman; David Agler. ♦ July 7 at 2: A production by Renaud Doucet and André Barbe of **"La Traviata,"** set in the nineteen-twenties, with Yalí-Marie Williams, Mark Hervieux, and Christopher Robertson; Joseph Rescigno. (McCarter Theatre, Princeton, N.J. 609-258-2787.)

RECITALS

RUTH LAREDO
The pianist performs Schubert's Sonata in A Major, Op. 120, the Impromptu in G-Flat Major, and a selection of waltzes and ländler. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. July 3 at 1. No tickets required.)



Ignat Solzhenitsyn plays Beethoven at the Mannes College of Music on July 7.

ALAIN PILON

BARGEMUSIC
July 4-5 at 7:30: The floating chamber-music festival, installed in an agreeably remade coffee barge, loosens up with a concert of Gaelic folk music presented by the bagpiper Michael Reid and the fiddler Jonathan Hardie, who play a range of traditional Scottish and Irish instruments. ♦ July 6 at 7:30 and July 7 at 4: Classical music returns with a program of Beethoven, Haydn (the Quartet in C Major, Op. 74, No. 1), and Brahms (the Clarinet Quintet). The performers include the violinist Carmit Zori and Reid, picking up his clarinet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MANNES BEETHOVEN INSTITUTE
Although the distinguished artists who make up this summer institute, devoted to the exploration of Beethoven's chamber music, will spend much of their time coaching student performers, they'll also participate in a number of public concerts. The first features the violinist Mark Steinberg and the pianists Thomas Sauer and Ignat Solzhenitsyn, who play a program including two of the sonatas for piano solo and the Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major, Op. 96. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. July 7 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

CONCERTS OUT OF TOWN

THE WEEKEND OF CHAMBER MUSIC
An eclectic little festival, despite its plain moniker, the series begins its ninth season. July 4 at 4: "Main Streets and Country Lanes," a program of folk music from the singer Annie Hat, the flutist Judith Pearce, and the guitarist William Anderson. (Liberty Museum and Arts Center, Liberty, N.Y.) ♦ July 6 at 8: A concert of Falla (the Harpsichord Concerto), Telemann, and Elliott Carter ("Esprit Rude, Esprit Doux"), played by a crack ensemble of New York freelancers. (Hortonville Presbyterian Church, Hortonville, N.Y.) (For tickets and information about both concerts, call 845-932-8414.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
July 4 at 8:30: Barbara Cook sings Sondheim tunes and other American favorites, with Wally Harper on piano and John Burr on bass. ♦ July 5 at 8: The Atlantic Brass Quintet offers a festive program of Byrd, Handel, Ives, and others. ♦ July 6 at 8:30: Peter Oundjian's second concert conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's is a feast of melody, a program of Wolf, Barber (the Violin Concerto, with Robert McDuffie), Dvořák (the Adagio from the seldom played Symphony No. 1, "The Bells of Zlonice"), and Schubert (the Symphony No. 3 in D Major). ♦ July 7 at 4:30: An all-Mozart program from the St. Lawrence Quartet, featuring the Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (with Todd Palmer). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
New York's favorite for out-of-town opera, pastorally located on the shore of Otsego Lake, begins its twenty-eighth season, a rangy schedule that includes verismo, contemporary opera, and, later on, comedy from Haydn and tragedy from Poulenc. July 5 at 8 and July 7 at 2: It's been more than twenty-five years since Glimmerglass last staged the classic verist double bill of **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** (featuring Eugenie Grunewald, Keith Ikaia-Purdy, Josepha Gayer, and Brian Montgomery) and **"Pagliacci"** (with Marie Plette, John MacMaster, Ned Barth, Paul Whelan, and Nicholas Phan), both directed by Robin Guarino; Stewart Robertson, the company's music director, conducts. ♦ July 6 at 8 and July 8 at 2: Mark Adamo's **"Little Women,"** a tuneful, direct, and well-paced treatment of the Alcott novel, directed by Rhoda Levine, with Jennifer Dudley, Christina Bouras, Caroline Worra, and Sandra Piques Eddy as the four March sisters; John DeMain conducts. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
July 5 at 8: The festival, the performance arm of Yale's Summer School of Music and Art, begins its season with a concert by the Contrasts Quartet and Eighth Blackbird, who première six new

works by the composers of the school's advanced seminar. The program will be given in Norfolk's wooden Music Shed, intimate and acoustically superb, where such composers as Rachmaninoff and Sibelius once performed their works. (Routes 44 and 272, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

TANGLEWOOD

Hugo Wolf's songs, at once intimate and monumental, are staples of the recital hall, but airings of their versions with orchestral accompaniment are exceedingly rare; Matthias Goerne's performances of five Goethe lieder are the highlight of the festival's upcoming events. July 5 at 8:30: Tanglewood's official opening night. The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, offers Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony, featuring the soprano Elizabeth Futral, the mezzo-soprano Sara Mingardo, and the Festival Chorus. ♦ July 6 at 8:30: De Burgos, exchanging Viennese complexity for Mediterranean warmth, conducts a program of Respighi ("Fountains of Rome" and "Pines of Rome") and Mendelssohn (the sunny "Italian" Symphony, and the Violin Concerto). The violinist is Itzhak Perlman. ♦ July 7 at 2:30: Goerne sings the Wolf songs (including "Anakreons Grab"), backed up by the B.S.O. and Roberto Abbado, who also conducts music by Barber and Dvořák (the "New World" Symphony). ♦ July 9 at 8:30: The soprano Jessye Norman sings a recital of Schubert, Strauss, Debussy, and Berlioz, with the pianist Mark Markham. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

July 6 at 8: The Bach conductor Joshua Rifkin, who also has a longstanding devotion to ragtime, plays piano rags, tangos, and waltzes by Scott Joplin and Ernesto Nazareth. ♦ July 7 at 3: A new-music concert by Eighth Blackbird, featuring works by George Perle ("Critical Moments II") and others. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

July 6 at 8: The St. Petersburg String Quartet offers a program of Mozart, Schubert (the seldom played Quartet in D Major, D. 94), and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in G Minor, with Maxim Mogilevsky). ♦ July 7 at 3: The same musicians play music by Shostakovich (the harrowing, one-movement Quartet No. 13), Beethoven, and Brahms (the Piano Trio in B Major). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

July 7 at 7: Jeffrey Frank, an editor at this magazine, offers passages from his satirical novel about politics, "The Columnist," and Kate Jennings reads from her novel "Moral Hazard." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ July 9 at 7: The journalist Alexia Lewnes reads from "Misplaced," her account of the lives of five New York City homeless children. (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ July 9 at 7: The novelists Jonathan Lethem and Colson Whitehead present an alfresco reading of their work. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777.)

TALK

July 8 at 7: The director Sam Mendes ("American Beauty") screens his new film, "Road to Perdition" and then talks about his work. (DGA Theatre, 110 W. 57th St. For more information, call 718-784-4520.)

WALKS

July 4 from 2 A.M. to 6 A.M.: The 92nd Street Y sponsors an all-night candlelit tour of lower Manhattan. The political and economic historian James S. Kaplan is the guide to such sights as Federal Hall, Foley Square, and St. Paul's Chapel. (For more information, call 415-5500.) ♦ July 6 at 12:30: The Friends of Dickens New York, a group devoted to the life, times, and works of the English novelist, heads to Roosevelt Island, which Dickens knew as Blackwell's Island when he visited it in 1842. (For more information, call 718-796-8249.)

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

The Sweetest Thing

MARCELLUS HALL

As if a giant statue of a bunny in the center of the store weren't enough, **DYLAN'S CANDY BAR** (1011 Third Ave., 646-735-0078) has its own infomercial playing on a screen between the ice-cream counter and a cotton-candy machine. "Depressed? Need a boost? Have some candy!" one woman shopper says. "I feel like a kid in a candy store, literally," another says. The shop, co-owned by the designer Ralph Lauren's daughter, Dylan, is organized, like a department store, into little boutiques. Songs like "Sugar, Sugar" and "Honey Pie" play on a continuous loop. Upstairs, the bulk bins are filled with gummy teeth, worms, and bears ($4.25 per half pound). But downstairs, each patch of wall space is expertly arranged with a different candy brand, from Pez dispensers (including a Santa whose head is made of Swarovski crystal) to custom M&M's (in colors like aqua green, teal green, green, and dark green). A wall covered with Chupa Chups—Spanish lollipops that come in ice-cream flavors—proves that candy is all about packaging. For example, there's the Tool Pop ($3.49), a Swiss Army Knife-like device that features low-tech plastic scissors, a magnifying glass, an eraser, a tiny, easy-to-lose pen, a tape dispenser, and a small compartment for a lollipop.

ECONOMY CANDY (108 Rivington St., 254-1531), run by Jerry Cohen and his wife, Ilene, doesn't quite have the same Willy Wonka flair as Dylan's. It's a place where a jar of cornichons ($2.99) shares floor space with El Bubble cigars (a box of thirty-six is $7.95). The Cohens' specialty is halvah—the Middle Eastern snack made of crushed sesame seeds, dried eggs, vegetable oil, and sugar—which comes in tubs and loaves, in vanilla, in marble, in pistachio, with nuts, and hand dipped in chocolate. They sell so much halvah that on a recent Sunday, a middle-aged man told his family, "We're getting halvah-ed out." Other customers tested Cohen's expertise. ("Are the nuts kosher?" one woman asked. "All nuts are kosher," Cohen said.) The store was opened by Cohen's father in 1937, and prices stay low because Economy is also a distributor to smaller stores around the city. An Eeyore Pez dispenser is only eighty-nine cents, Jelly Belly jelly beans are $4.99 a pound, and a PMS chocolate bar ("For any time of the month") is $1.29. Cohen says that everything he sells is fresh: "If it sits here we put it on special or donate it to the shul."

CHOCOLATE BAR (48 Eighth Ave., 366-1541), a coffee bar and chocolate shop in the West Village, occupies a space that was formerly a shipping and packing store. "It's kind of a strange block. I don't want to call it a dead block," says Matt Lewis, who left a job in advertising to open the shop and man its espresso machine. Beyond the standard coffee drinks, the shop sells what it calls "liquid chocolate" and brownies in "classic" and "Mexican" (with a chili-pepper kick). The place is painted mostly orange, because Alison Nelson, Lewis's business partner, discovered in art class that it was a "welcoming color." "Let's have a happy color, I thought," she says. "Our other colors are brown and caramel." Recently, Lewis wore an orange Club Monaco T-shirt, and Nelson wore a caramel Burberry skirt, though she wished she'd chosen something a little less fashionable. "I had milk in my shoe this morning," she said.

—*Marshall Heyman*

MOVIES OPENING

GROUP

An experimental drama directed by Marilyn Freeman about nine women who meet each week for therapy, in which the screen is divided into six sections showing different camera perspectives. Opening July 5. (Village East Cinemas.)

LIKE MIKE

The hip-hop singer Lil' Bow Wow plays an orphan who discovers a pair of magic basketball shoes. With Allen Iverson, Karl Malone, and other N.B.A. players. Opening July 3.

MEN IN BLACK II

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 3.

ME WITHOUT YOU

A drama that begins in London in the seventies and traces the friendship of two women through three decades. With Michelle Williams and Anna Friel. Written and directed by Sandra Goldbacher. Opening July 5. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOTORIOUS C.H.O.

Margaret Cho headlines her second live-comedy movie. Opening July 5. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE POWERPUFF GIRLS MOVIE

The Cartoon Network show comes to the big screen. Opening July 3.

READ MY LIPS

A thriller about a shy secretary (Emmanuelle Devos) who gets drawn into the criminal life of a young trainee in her office (Vincent Cassel). Written and directed by Jacques Audiard. In French. Opening July 5. (Paris.)

SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR

Roy Andersson wrote and directed this black comedy that portrays a series of absurd situations, such as a traffic jam extended to infinity and a magic trick gone horribly wrong. In Swedish. Opening July 3. (Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

ABOUT A BOY

In this adaptation of the Nick Hornby novel, Hugh Grant's usual character, the shy and charming English bachelor, gets seriously revised into a kind of media-age Oblomov, Will Freeman, a connoisseur of pop music and old movies. Will bestirs himself only to chase girls whom he has no intention of sticking with. By degrees, this selfish layabout becomes friends with Marcus (Nicholas Hoult), an unhappy twelve-year-old boy whose mother (Toni Collette) is a seriously depressed hippie in feathers. The directors Paul and Chris Weitz—the "American Pie" brothers—have tried hard not to make a tearjerker, and at its best the movie is knowing and tart. But the structure of the story inevitably encourages shamelessness: there's an awful scene in which Will makes a fool of himself, singing "Killing Me Softly" in a school auditorium to save Marcus from performing alone.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/02.) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

BAD COMPANY

The plot is about suitcase nukes, so the movie has been sitting on the shelf for a while. It's also a Jerry Bruckheimer production, so forget about subtlety. But Chris Rock and Anthony Hopkins make for a pretty good odd couple, and the director Joel Schumacher shoots some glossy and effective showdowns. So far so good, that is, until the final set piece in Grand Central Station, a doomsday scenario that gives this popcorn flick a nightmare afterglow.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE BOURNE IDENTITY

In this latest iteration of the international thriller, two young people—an amnesiac American who possesses mysterious violent skills (Matt Damon), and a beautiful European vagabond with a taste for adventure (Franka Potente)—race across Europe to escape powerful forces eager to kill them both. Adapted by Tony Gilroy and William Blake Herron from a 1980 novel by Robert Ludlum, the picture has tons of up-to-date surveillance equipment, and it features an unfamiliar Filipino martial art called *kali,* a kind of stuttered karate (block, block, slash, kick). But the movie is still a relic of the bipolar Cold War, and suffers from a fatal lack of purpose. Great actors like Brian Cox and Clive Owen are wasted in tiny roles, and Julia Stiles, as an operative lucky enough to be assigned to Paris, is stuck in a closed room wearing headphones all the time. Directed by Doug Liman, who used to make nifty little movies like "Swingers" and "Go."—*D.D.* (6/17 & 24/02) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

COMING
ATTRACTIONS
F

DAHMER

A docudrama about the man who "tried to create living zombies" that skirts the gory side of its appalling subject. The director, David Jacobson, relies on a time-shifting narrative: Jeffrey Dahmer's life is played as a fluid moment, with his past and present coexisting in monstrous harmony. Jeremy Renner plays the serial killer, and his performance gives a disturbing depth to the well-wrought scenes of alienation, parental bullying (Bruce Davison plays Dahmer's overbearing father), and murderous gratification.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center.)

DAYBREAK

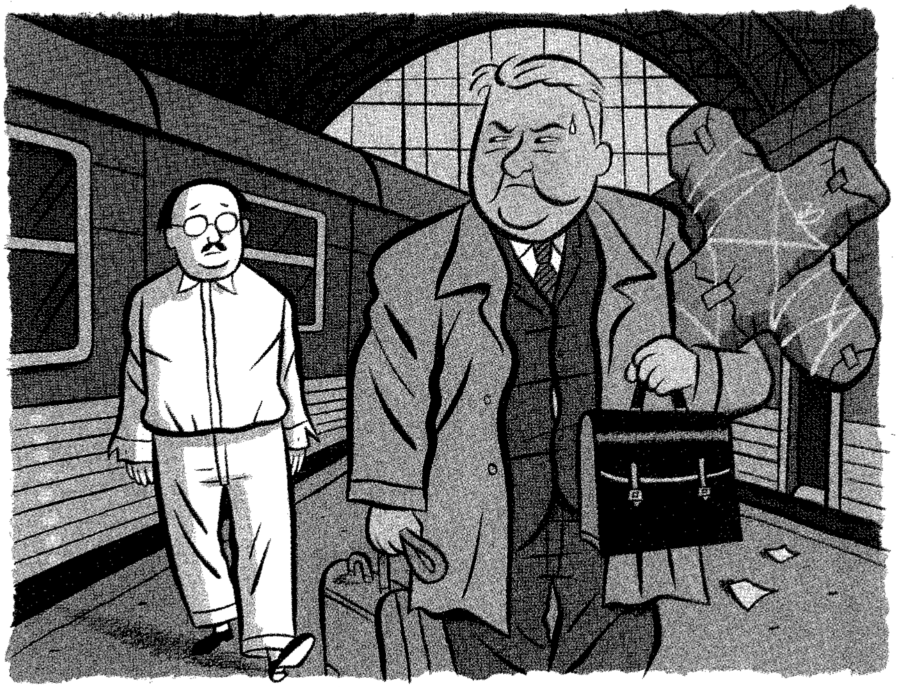
The director Marcel Carné and the writer Jacques Prévert collaborated on this justly famous 1939 film about a decent sort of man (Jean Gabin) who is forced to become a murderer by the masochistic trickery of the man he kills, played by Jules Berry. Perhaps the finest of the French poetic melodramas, it's a definitive example of sensuous, atmospheric moviemaking—you feel that you're breathing the air that Gabin breathes. With Arletty and Jacqueline Laurent, and a good score by Maurice Jaubert. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 5-6.)

THE FAST RUNNER (ATANARJUAT)

A three-hour marathon of ice, snow, and raw seal meat. This Inuit epic may be something of a tough sell, but many of the visual sequences—the Arctic in summer and winter—are sublime and unprecedented. A ten-minute episode showing the hero, Atanarjuat, running across a frozen sea has been hailed, justifiably, as a masterstroke, but there are many other discoveries, like sunshine filtering through the cracks of an igloo and the gray-on-gray polar horizon. Directed by the Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, the movie's straight-arrow tale of murder and revenge carries it through the more tedious "Nanook of the North" moments. But even these digressions—for example, scenes that show the way the Inuit greet each other, carry themselves, and cut their food—stay with you. At the extreme north, the basic motions of life somehow seem startling and fresh. In Inuktitut.—*M.A.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

FIVE EASY PIECES

The flaws of this acutely self-conscious 1970 road picture grow more obvious with every passing year, but so does its passion and eloquence. Jack Nicholson gave his breakthrough lead performance as the cultivated roughneck Bobby Dupea. He's working on an oil rig in Southern California and living with a waitress (Karen Black), but he has so many pockets of frustrated energy that he's ready to bolt almost from the get-go. Before long, at the behest of his sister (Lois Smith), he travels to the Pacific Northwest to visit his ailing father—the patriarch of a family of classical musicians. The movie overstates the insularity of both trailer parks and high-culture retreats, but Nicholson fuses it all with his electric awareness—no one has better captured alienation in action. The director, Bob Rafelson, and the writer, Carole Eastman, come up with memorable bits for the entire cast, and the movie's famous, influential set pieces—Bobby walking out of his car in a traffic jam or trying to order toast at a diner with a "no substitutions" policy—have lost none of their humor or power.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; July 6-7.)



Opening July 3 at Film Forum, Roy Andersson's "Songs from the Second Floor."

TODAY

Produce virtual crash dummy

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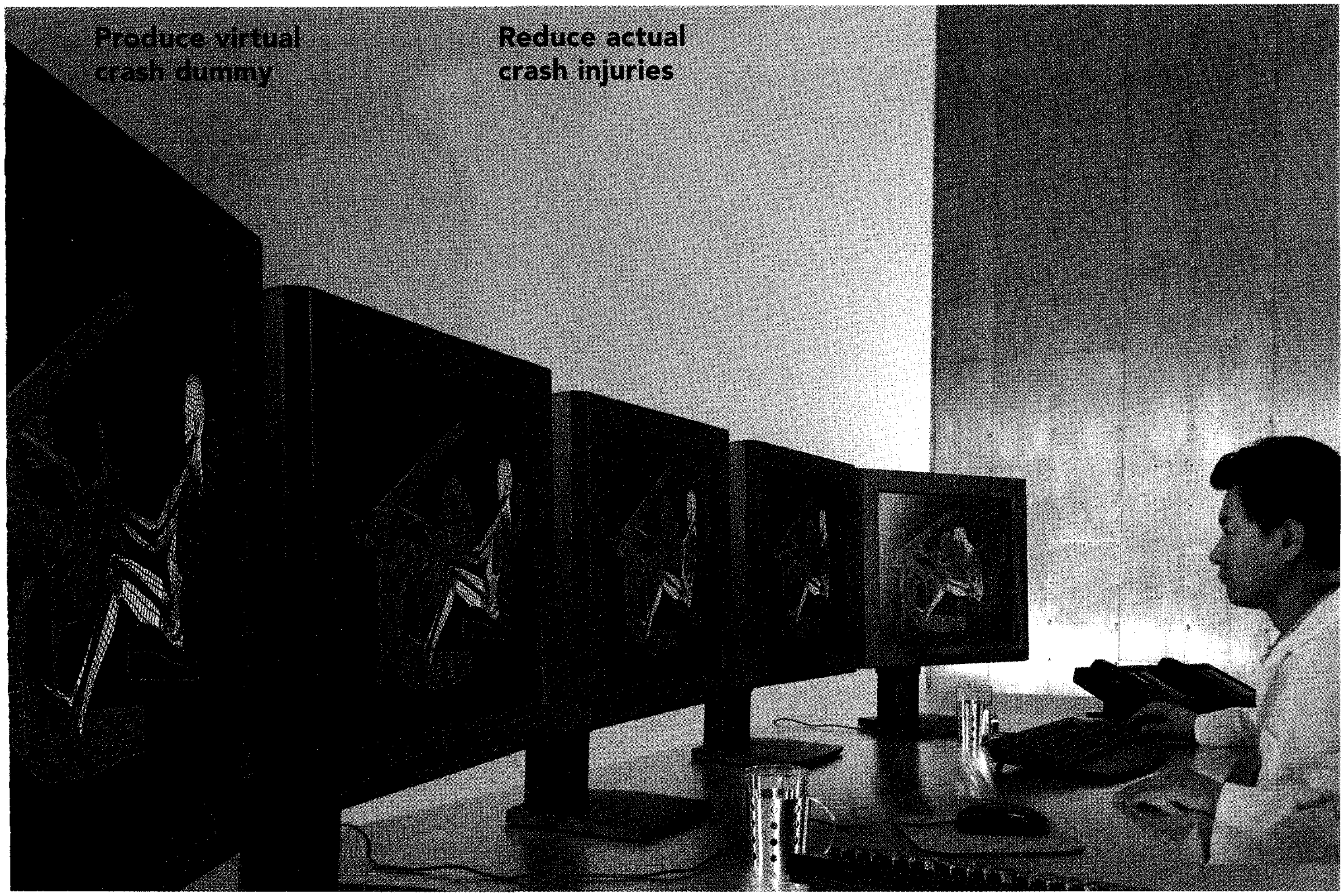

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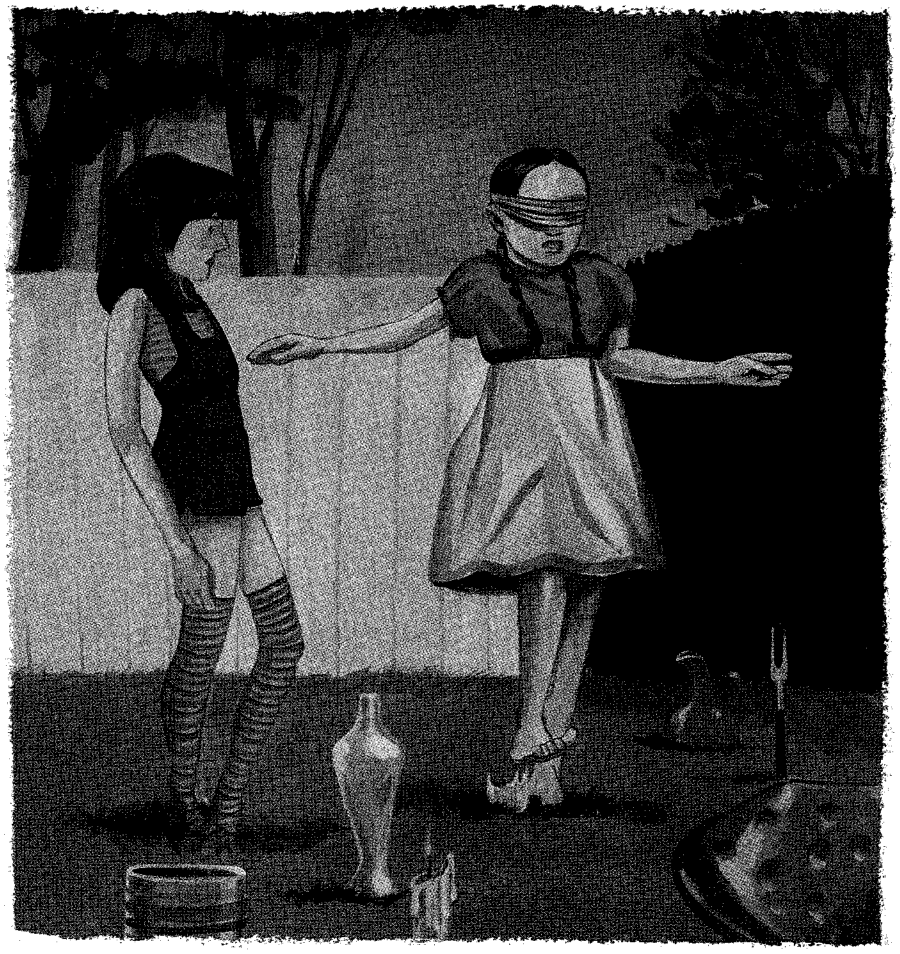
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

An impish, sunny, and perfectly unnecessary production of the Wilde classic, directed by Oliver Parker. The Anthony Asquith version, from 1952, was stagey and artificial, which felt right for Wilde's confection. This movie is set in a "real" London of top hats, naughty music-hall girls, and primitive automobiles. Frances O'Connor, as Gwendolen Fairfax, is sexually very knowing, and gets the name Ernest tattooed on her rump. Colin Firth is a good Jack Worthing, but Rupert Everett's limited comic resources are exposed in the role of Algernon—he's arch rather than funny. Judi Dench makes the odd mistake of playing Lady Bracknell as if she were a real person, rather than the most entertaining caricature in the history of the theatre.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Orpheum VII.)



Opening July 5, "Me Without You," written and directed by Sandra Goldbacher.

ZOHAR LAZAR

INSOMNIA

A dark and fidgety picture from Christopher Nolan, who made such a splash with "Memento." Al Pacino plays Will Dormer, a detective from Los Angeles, who is flown to the wilds of Alaska (couldn't they find anyone closer?) to unravel a nasty, intractable killing. Soon, he is fouled up in another death, which everyone hopes was accidental. Meanwhile, a local suspect (Robin Williams) shows his face, or, at any rate, gives Dormer something to run after. The ensuing chase scenes are the best thing in the film: Nolan's busy, ravenous technique has something to bite on. The rest of the movie shows what happens when a style goes in search of a mystery; the fretful power play of the two leads, like the cop's yawning sleeplessness, seems not so much grounded in character as applied like makeup. Still, Nolan's depiction of desolate backwaters is immaculate, and the women in the tale—Hilary Swank as a perky cop and Maura Tierney as the sad-faced keeper of the hotel—somehow leaven the air of contrivance.—*Anthony Lane* (5/27/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LATE MARRIAGE

An Israeli in his early thirties, Zaza (Lior Ashkenazi) has all the rueful moroseness that you would expect to find in a graduate student in philosophy. He is also marriageable but single, a predicament that drives his parents to despair. The cause of such diffidence, even when Zaza is faced with prospective brides of unquestionable beauty, can be traced to his secret girlfriend, Judith (Ronit Elkabetz), a divorced mother of one. Dover Koshashvili's film swings back and forth between the hero's family, with their impositions and great expectations, and the loving, liberated randiness of his semi-hidden life. Up to the end, you are kept guessing as to which will prevail. In Georgian and Hebrew.—*A.L.* (5/27/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema Village, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

LILO & STITCH

Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois, two of the talents behind Disney's staid Chinese-maiden movie, "Mulan," shake things up with a raucous tale of a lonely Hawaiian girl, Lilo, who befriends a mischievous critter from another planet, Stitch. With painted watercolor backgrounds and a Looney Tunes-like atmosphere, the animation has a sweet familiarity. The ugly-duckling story is laced with a delightful, frenzied humor, and the dialogue reaches beyond the usual tart pop-culture references—there are some lovely shadings to the characters. When Lilo teaches Stitch to impersonate the King, it's Elvis in Hawaii all over again.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Cinema 2, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

LOST HORIZON

The original 1937 version of the James Hilton novel, directed by Frank Capra—part popular adventure and part prissy, high-flown cracker-barrel sentimentality. The early trip through the icy waste is exciting, and Ronald Colman speaks in his charmingly cadenced manner, but Shangri-La, the genteel Himalayan utopia of peace, health, and eternal life, resembles, as Graham Greene pointed out, a film star's luxurious estate in Beverly Hills.—*P.K.* (Bryant Park; July 8.)

LOVELY & AMAZING

A comedy about self-dissatisfaction, featuring a mother and three daughters in Los Angeles. Jane Marks (Brenda Blethyn), the mom, undergoes liposuction and flirts with her doctor; Michelle (Catherine Keener), stuck in a loveless marriage, can't sell the little chair sculptures that she makes; Elizabeth (Emily Mortimer), an actress, thinks that she's ugly and encourages her bedmate, a narcissistic actor (Dermot Mulroney), to judge her naked body, limb by limb; Annie (Raven Goodwin), an African-American girl adopted as an infant by Jane, worries over her hair. The writer-director Nicole Holofcener has a gentle touch, though she doesn't pull her themes together as much as one would like. The movie is intelligent and funny but a little unfocussed. With James LeGros and, as Michelle's eager teen lover, Jake Gyllenhaal.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 1, and Empire 25.)

THE LOWER DEPTHS

Jean Renoir's 1936 version of the Maxim Gorky play features those two magnetic poles of French acting—Louis Jouvet as the gambling baron who sinks to living in a flophouse, and Jean Gabin as the thief trying to climb up to a different life. Their scenes together are gems of the French film tradition. This movie has one of those emblematic moments that people talk about for years afterward: Jouvet, having lost everything, comes away from the gaming tables and can't light his cigarette. This scene was, for the thirties, what Belmondo rubbing his lips in "Breathless" was for the sixties. In French.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 4 and July 7.)

MINORITY REPORT

A frantic return to form for Steven Spielberg, whose pulse seems to have quickened after the sluggish musings of "A.I." We are still stuck in the future, but it comes with a twist from the mazelike mind of Philip K. Dick. Tom Cruise plays John Anderton, a bright spark in the shadowy field of Pre-crime. With a little help from three oracles known as the Pre-Cognitives, he is able to predict, and therefore to prevent, approaching murders. The homicide rate has plunged, although the monitoring official from the Justice Department (Colin Farrell) looks worried about the ethics of the program. (Spielberg, like all good directors, has luck on his side; could he have known, when he began the film, that detention without trial would once again become a fiery topic?) Where "A.I." was a wandering quest, this is a straightforward chase, as Anderton finds himself accused and hunted down. Spielberg is able to flex those muscles—his ridiculous powers of suspense—that threw him so hard into the movie business in the first place. Like "Jaws," the new film is none too serious, though it is forever touching on serious things; the world it unveils may look dark, yet the plot accelerates with the lightness of comedy. With a great supporting cast, including Lois Smith, Neal McDonough, and, most startling of all, Samantha Morton as a Pre-Cog.—*A.L.* (7/1/02) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

THE PIANO TEACHER

Michael Haneke's calmly lucid masterpiece is about a seemingly unmanageable subject: a sadomasochistic piano teacher, Professor Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppert), who maintains a sternly proper façade at the Vienna Conservatory while tormenting and playing dirty tricks on her talented students. Erika tries to control the insolently charming and handsome young piano student (Benoît Magimel) who wants to be her lover. She's a remarkable dramatic creation—an appalling but plausible human being brought to life by one of the world's bravest actresses. This is a genuinely shocking movie (one scene of self-mutilation is hard to take), but it's supremely intelligent, too, and there isn't a trace of sensationalism. In French.—*D.D.* (4/1/02) (Cinema Village.)

ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS
Luchino Visconti's strange, sprawling 1961 epic—a flamboyant melodrama about how a poor Sicilian family (a mother and her five sons) is corrupted and eventually destroyed by life in Milan. Visconti's methods are still partly neorealist, but the scale of the film is huge and operatic, and it loses the intimacy of the best neorealist films, and their breath of life. This is more like a hollow, spectacular version of a Warners movie of the thirties (three of the sons take turns in the prizefight ring). The movie is memorable largely because of Annie Girardot's stunning performance as a prostitute, while the weirdest aspect is the casting of Alain Delon (who at times seems to be lighted as if he were Hedy Lamarr) as a saintly, simple Prince Myshkin. Renato Salvatori plays the most forceful of the brothers—it's actually his sexual passion rather than the horrors of urban existence that destroys the family. The script is adapted from the novel "The Bridge of Ghisolfa," by Giovanni Testori; there are also suggestions of the Biblical story of Joseph and his brethren. In Italian.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; July 5-9.)

SPIDER-MAN
The perils and advantages of being bitten by a genetically modified spider are made abundantly clear in Sam Raimi's enjoyable, if broken-backed, exercise in high-cost pulp. Tobey Maguire plays Peter Parker, who develops a useful ability to hurl threads of web from his wrists and thus becomes, to his delight, the highest swinger in town. This prowess earns him the adoration of Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) and the enmity of the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), whose infinite capacity for evil is slightly undercut by the fact that he began life as a man called Norman. The movie is all over the place, unable to decide, for instance, whether New York should be shot as a livable city or as a Gothamite gulf of crime; similarly, Dafoe delivers a cartoon while Maguire offers a funny, rueful study in uncertain heroics.—*A.L.* (5/13/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

STAR WARS:
EPISODE II—ATTACK OF THE CLONES
The Republic? The Federation? The Separatists? The clone army? The droid army? The Siths? The Kith? The Kin? The plot is incomprehensible to anyone over fourteen, and the actors intone their starched-collar lines as if they were attending a convention of rural vicars. But, allowing for some dull moments, George Lucas's latest movie has considerable style. Digital invention is becoming grander, wilder, more free-spirited: the multi-levelled cities of the past overflow with life. It would be nice to think that Lucas's visual imagination is just now taking off.—*D.D.* (5/20/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS
It has a female chorus—it's that important a movie. This latest in a series of super-productions devoted to Tom Clancy's fictional C.I.A. agent Jack Ryan (Ben Affleck) also features such familiar sights as mockups of the White House Situation Room, nuclear missiles rising on their launchers for takeoff, and an international cast of grimly serious actors speaking in foreign languages and dragging their subtitles from room to room. It's not the fault of the filmmakers (Paul Attanasio and Daniel Pyne wrote the script; Phil Alden Robinson directed) that actual events have overtaken the portentous clichés. But, as an evocation of danger, the movie is nowhere near serious or intelligent enough to satisfy our current sense of alarm. In a bold updating of Clancy's plot, the villains of the piece are turned into . . . Nazis.—*D.D.* (6/3/02) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

SUNSHINE STATE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Empire 25 and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

WINDTALKERS
Joe Enders (Nicolas Cage), a guilt-ridden Marine hero in the Second World War, receives a peculiar assignment: he must babysit one of the American Indians who speak a valuable battlefield code based on their Navajo language. The twist: Joe doesn't want to get close to his charge, Ben Yahzee (Adam Beach), because he might have to kill him to protect the code. In some ways the movie, directed by Hong Kong's pride, John Woo, is a standard platoon film, but some of the battle episodes, set on the island of Saipan, in 1944, are spectacular and harrowing. Woo has a weakness for slow-motion sequences, but he stages fierce moments of hand-to-hand combat, and the grouchy, hard-won, never acknowledged love between the two men is touching, even if we've seen things like it before.—*D.D.* (6/17 & 24/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

CINEMA PARADISO: THE NEW VERSION
Paris and Village East Cinemas.
THE DANGEROUS LIVES OF ALTAR BOYS
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, and Sunshine Cinema.
DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS
Village East Cinemas.
THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES
First and 62nd Cinemas, Union Square, and Village East Cinemas.
HARVARD MAN
Cinema Village.
MR. DEEDS
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
MONSOON WEDDING (2/18 & 25/02)
First & 62nd Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
PUMPKIN
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.
SCOOBY-DOO
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
13 CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ONE THING
BAM Rose Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
WAR PHOTOGRAPHER
Film Forum.
Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN (3/18/02)
Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through July 21: "Jack Nicholson in the Seventies." July 6-7 at 2: "Five Easy Pieces" (†). ♦ July 6 at 4: "The King of Marvin Gardens" (1972, Bob Rafelson). ♦ July 7 at 4: "Drive, He Said" (1971, Nicholson). ♦ Repertory nights. July 6-7 at 6:30: "Knife in the Water" (1962, Roman Polanski; in Polish).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—July 3 at 4:30 and 8:15: "Reds" (1981, Warren Beatty). ♦ July 4-5 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Unforgiven" (1992, Clint Eastwood). ♦ July 6-7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:20: "R-Xmas" (2001, Abel Ferrara). ♦ July 8-9 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Intimacy" (2000, Patrice Chéreau; in French).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. (512-5700)—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing. The feature on July 8 will be "Lost Horizon" (†).

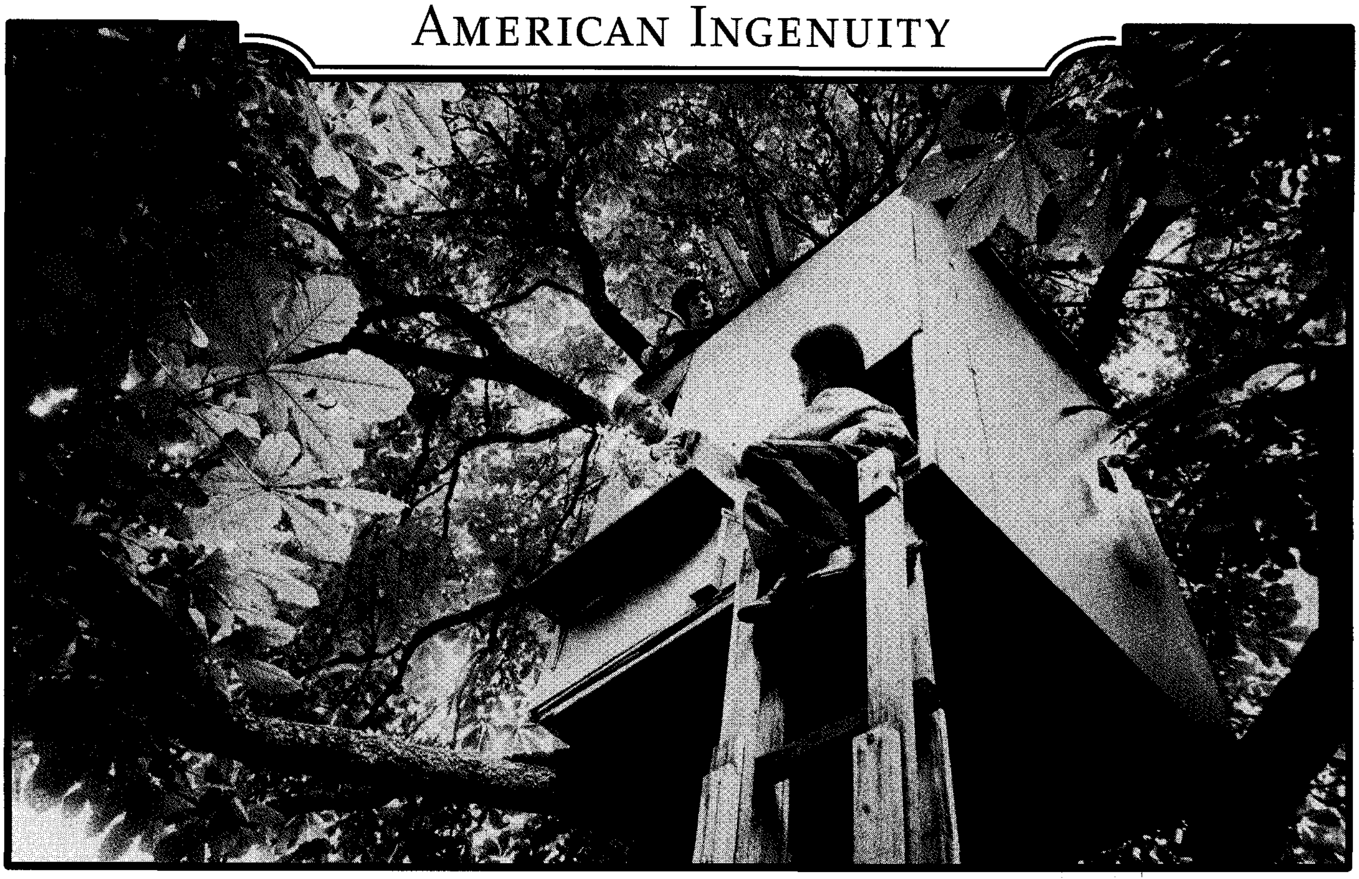
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—July 3-4 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Three Women" (1977, Robert Altman). ♦ Starting July 5 at 1:20, 4:40, and 8: "Rocco and His Brothers" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. July 5-6: "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981, Steven Spielberg).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Classic French cinema. The 2 P.M. screenings are double features. July 6 at 2, 6:45, and 9:15 and July 7 at 2: "Orpheus" (1950, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ July 6 at 4:15 and July 7 at 4:15, 6:30, and 9: "Black Orpheus" (1958, Marcel Camus; in Portuguese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through July 18: "Everybody's Star: Jean Gabin." Unless otherwise noted, all films are in French. July 3 at 1, 5, and 9: "The Impostor" (1944, Julien Duvivier; in English). ♦ July 3-4 at 3 and 7: "Moontide" (1942, Archie Mayo and Fritz Lang; in English). ♦ July 4 and July 7 at 1, 5, and 9: "The Lower Depths" (†). ♦ July 5 at 1, 5:15, and 9:15 and July 6 at 3:10 and 7:20: "Daybreak" (†). ♦ July 5 at 3 and 7:15 and July 6 at 1, 5:10, and 9:15: "The Human Beast" (1938, Jean Renoir). ♦ July 7 at 3 and 7 and July 8 at 2 and 6: "Gueule d'Amour" (1937, Jean Grémillon). ♦ July 8 at 4 and 8: "Le Plaisir" (1951, Max Ophüls). ♦ July 9 at 2 and 6:30: "En Cas de Malheur" (1958, Claude Autant-Lara). ♦ July 9 at 4:15 and 8:45: "La Marie du Port" (1938, Marcel Carné).

AMERICAN INGENUITY



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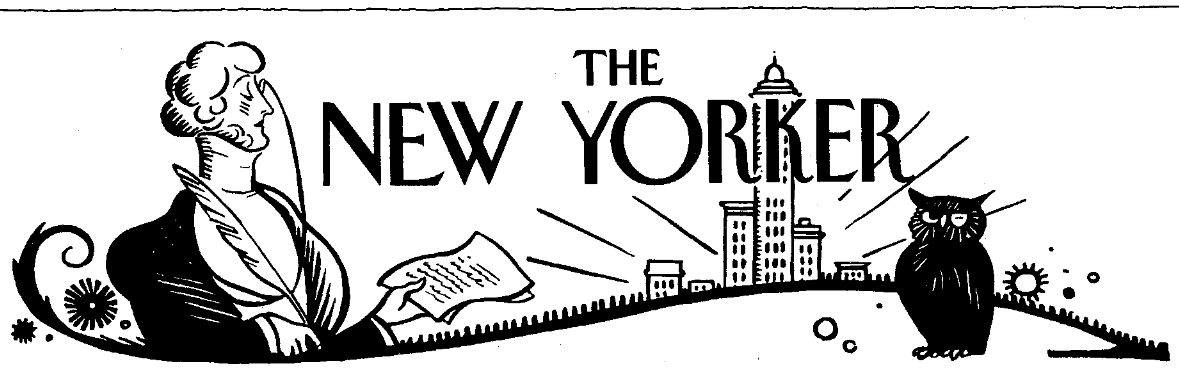
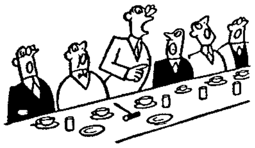


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
SHORT-SIGHTED

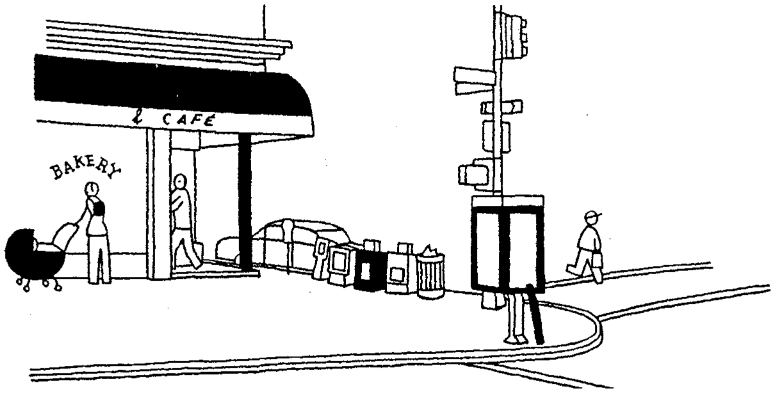


On May 23, 1985, Sidney Hook received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Ronald Reagan, along with such distinguished Americans as Chuck Yeager, Frank Sinatra, and Jimmy Stewart. At the time, Hook was eighty-two, and one of the most prominent public intellectuals of his generation. He had spent most of the early part of his career studying Karl Marx, attempting—somewhat quixotically—a fusion of revolutionary theory and American pragmatism, and was a self-described "fellow-traveller." In 1933, he served as the "ideological spokesman" for the American Workers Party, and the next year helped arrange its merger with the country's leading Trotskyist organization, the Communist League of America. In later life, however, Hook flipped, or at least appeared to flip, sides. Eventually, he would defend the rooting out of Communist Party members from government and academia, condemn the anti-democratic tactics of the anti-war movement, and announce his support for, of all people, Richard Nixon. When he was awarded the Medal of Freedom, Hook was a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, perhaps the country's most respected conservative think tank.

Hook, who died in 1989, would have been a hundred this year. To mark the occasion, a group of scholars and admirers decided to honor him in New York in the fall with a two-day symposium, "Sidney Hook Reconsidered." Prominent in the group were some of the country's leading neoconservative thinkers: Irving Kristol, a founding editor of *The Public Interest;* Gertrude Himmelfarb, the historian; and Hilton Kramer, the editor and publisher of *The New Criterion*. Recently, however, Kristol, Himmelfarb, and Kramer, along with John Patrick Diggins, a professor of history at the CUNY Graduate Center, told the organizers that they no longer wished to be associated with the event in any way. "I had never been presented with a list of participants," Kramer later told *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, explaining his decision not to attend. "When I saw that Cornel West was a participant, I decided that it wouldn't be appropriate."

None of those boycotting the conference have actually used the term "boycott," but that is the word for it, and Hook, presumably, would have seen the irony. Throughout his life, he saw himself as a champion of free expression, which he defended not just as an individual right but as a precondition of knowledge. One of his rules for democratic discourse stated, "The cardinal sin, when we are looking for truth of fact or wisdom of policy, is refusal to discuss, or action which blocks discussion." Another declared, "*Before* impugning an opponent's motives, even when they legitimately may be impugned, answer his arguments."

West, to be sure, is also guilty of violating the Hookian ideal. In his much publicized wrangling with the president of Harvard, Lawrence Summers, West, until recently a professor in the university's Afro-American department, clearly resorted to impugning his opponent's motives; at one particularly ugly moment he labelled Summers, who is Jewish, the "Ariel Sharon of American higher education." Still, to place West beyond the pale is to construct the pale awfully narrowly. Before he assumed the co-



LAURENT CILLUFFO

chairmanship of Al Sharpton's exploratory Presidential committee, or cut a rap CD, West wrote a well-received book on American pragmatism—a book in which Hook's ideas figure prominently.

Whether the conference will be better or worse for the absence of Kramer et al.—or the presence of West—is itself a matter that reasonable people could disagree on. Surely, though, the whole messy business has made Hook's legacy seem a lot more relevant. "Although this isn't what we wanted, it isn't unwelcome," Matthew Cotter, a CUNY graduate student and one of the conference's organizers, observed dryly. Hook, he added, "would have appreciated this kind of controversy."

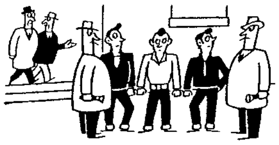
The sort of short-sightedness exhibited in the conference boycott is, of course, hardly limited to scholars on the right, and sometimes the stakes are much higher. In an open letter to the *Guardian* of London this spring, more than a hundred European scholars called for an academic boycott of Israel; the group went as far as to call on the European Union to stop awarding grants to Israeli researchers, as a way of "exerting pressure" on their government to negotiate with the Palestinians. The E.U.'s commissioner for research rightly dismissed the boycott call, arguing, among other things, that cutting international ties among scholars was at odds with the goal of ending conflict. Nevertheless, a few weeks ago a highly respected academic journal, *The Translator*, decided to honor the boycott, and dismissed an Israeli scholar from its editorial board. A sister publication dismissed another Israeli from its advisory board.

Two years before his death, Hook published his autobiography, which he titled, with some satisfaction, "Out of Step." In it, he denied ever having changed his outlook on politics, or really anything else, but he did acknowledge having made numerous mistakes. "When I look back on my long life, I am not aware of having undergone any serious conversions from the days of my youth, or of having abandoned my basic ideals or surrendered my faith in intelligence as the most reliable guide in solving problems—to the extent that they are soluble," he wrote. "As the reader will have noted, I have made grievous errors in judgment—about persons and movements and about the possibilities of progressive changes in American life—but the ideals that led me into these errors are the very ones that, in the light of the historical evidence, led me out of them. Idealism, alas, does not protect one from ignorance, dogmatism, and foolishness."

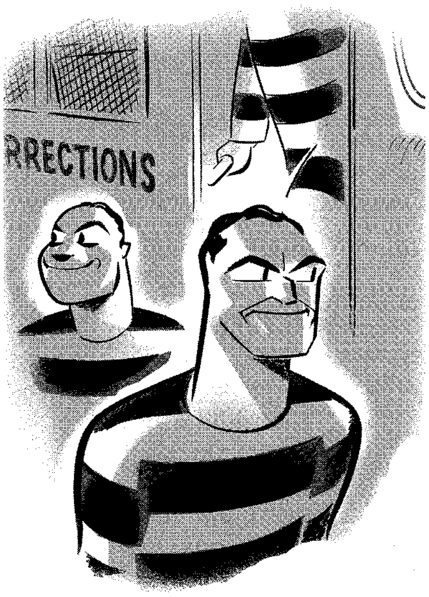
—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS

HERE COMES THE NEIGHBORHOOD



For as long as anyone can remember (that is, about seventeen years), a busload of inmates newly released from Rikers Island has been dropped off each weekday morning on a street corner in Long Island City, Queens. At around 5 A.M., a school bus, colored Department of Corrections orange-white-and-blue, pulls up to a discount furniture store on Jackson Avenue and delivers fifty or so rough-looking gentlemen into the pre-dawn squalor of Queens Plaza South. They tumble to the sidewalk carrying garbage bags full of their belongings and scatter quickly. Some head for the No. 7 train (or the W, F, N, R, V, or G), others for a nearby twenty-four-hour doughnut shop, still others for idling cars occupied by family members or friends, and a few for the long-anticipated comforts of prostitutes, who, despite a crackdown called Operation Clean Sweep, move in and out of the shadows beneath the Queensboro Bridge.



ERIC PALMA

Queens Plaza is braided, like a sub-Arctic river, and difficult to navigate; there seem to be a lot of streets and little traffic islands. It is bisected by the ramp of the bridge and is surrounded on all sides by strip clubs (thirteen in all), with such names as Venus and Scandals, which means that there are as many livery cars as cop cars there. It is a befuddling and dismal place, especially if you're on foot, at five in the morning—though it's ideal, in its way, for the savoring of new freedoms.

But that may be changing. Last month, the north side of Queens Plaza was re-christened MetLife Plaza, in honor of its newest tenant, which has about a thousand employees there. MetLife is merely the latest indication of the spiffing up of Long Island City; it joins the Citigroup tower to the south, the temporary Museum of Modern Art to the east, and a handful of new luxury apartment buildings to the west. To some dreamers the neighborhood is the future home of a glittering Olympic village. "The signs are clear," Eric Gioia, the district's city councilman, said last week. "New coffeehouses, new restaurants, artists on building steps—Long Island City looks like what I imagine SoHo did thirty years ago."

In other words, it aspires to be the kind of neighborhood that does not easily absorb a nightly dispersal of jittery ex-convicts. To that end, some interested parties have taken on the task of diverting the Rikers Express elsewhere, or getting rid of it altogether. Gioia, citing it as an impediment to the ongoing development of western Queens, has asked Mayor Bloomberg to consider a new discharge policy. (The Mayor, according to a spokesman, is working on it.) Gioia would like to see the city disperse the inmates in other boroughs as well, not just dump them in his district.

MetLife, meanwhile, recently commissioned a report evaluating other potential dropoff spots around the city. The study, produced by the Wadley-Donovan Group, a corporate-location consulting firm, is a chilly exercise in NIMBY calculus; it aims at identifying a place that is, more or less, in nobody's back yard. The new dropoff spot would have to be as close to Rikers as Queens Plaza, or closer—that is, within three and a half miles of the Rikers Island bridge. It would also have to be near a subway station that is open between four and six in the morning. And, above all, it would require, as the report puts it, "bordering station environments that are less developed (under-utilized) in support of minimum employer/resident objection." In short, the more barren, the better—no community equals no community opposition. The study relied on several variables in grading prospective dropoff spots: population density, commercial activity, preponderance of families and "family-based characteristics" (schools and so forth), income level. The lower each variable, the higher each dropoff point's grade. "To have the least negative impact on upscale development and the quest for high-end uses," the report reads, "the lowest Median Household Income received the highest score." That is to say, the people who live near the new dropoff point should be poor.

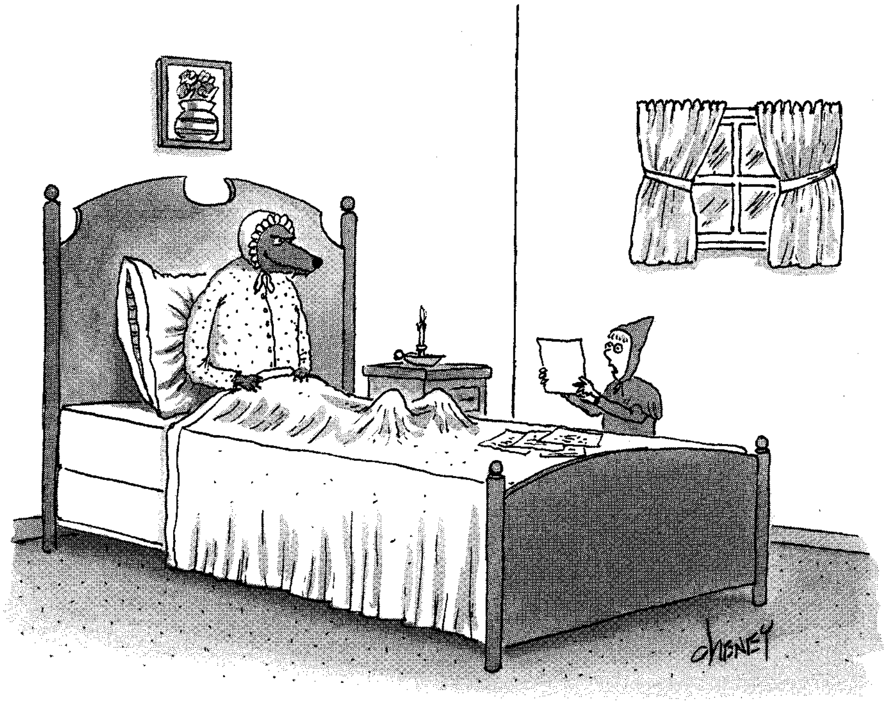
Ten potential dropoff spots scored higher than Queens Plaza—two in the Bronx and eight in Queens. (The only Manhattan sites under consideration were in Harlem.) The winner, by a landslide, was Willets Point and Roosevelt Avenue, in Queens, otherwise known as the parking lot at Shea Stadium, a windswept wasteland if ever there was one (with the stench of Flushing Bay at low tide as an added bonus).

Who knows? It could turn out to be a boon to Shea—and a blow to Queens Plaza. Over the years, a micro-economy, not all of it illegal, has blossomed around the daily dropoff. On a recent Friday morning, two buses rolled up at five-thirty, and the men streamed off. It was the weekend load—a hundred-plus wild-eyed men, in their civvies. One guy in a Giants jersey and big shorts hooted and patted the ground. Another marched west, turned abruptly and came back, then turned west again. "Where the hell am I?" he shouted. "Where's the 7 train?" A block away, a pack formed on the corner outside the Friendly Grocery & Deli, beginning an arcane exchange of cigarettes and dollar bills. One man bought a copy of the *News*. There was, for a brief spell, a line at Donuts Unlimited. "I'll have a toasted sesame bagel with cream cheese," a man in a "Star Wars" T-shirt said.

"No bagels," the man behind the counter said.

"No bagels? Then I'll have a couple of those bow ties." He fished in his pocket for change.

—*Nick Paumgarten*



"My goodness, Grandmother, what big shares you dumped just before these companies went belly-up!"

• •

CHIANTI POSTCARD
A VERRAZZANO TRIBUTE

Not long ago, Cavalier Luigi Cappellini and his wife, Silvia, gave a dinner party, at the Castello di Verrazzano, in Chianti, to mark the anniversary of the discovery of New York Bay, by Giovanni da Verrazzano, in 1524. Luigi, a springy, elegant Tuscan, is the owner of the castle that was the seat of the Verrazzano family for more than seven hundred years. In addition to making wine and olive oil and running the hunting parks, forests, and tenant farms of the original estate, Luigi has assumed the role of ambassador from Verrazzano to the City of New York, which keeps him in frequent transatlantic motion.

The castle is perched on a mountain spur high above the non-navigable River Greve. It is surrounded by vineyards and olive groves, and its crenellated medieval tower is just visible above a cluster of cypresses. The Verrazzano family was already ancient when Giovanni was born here, in 1485. When he embarked for the New World, in January of 1524, at the request of King Francis I of France, Europeans had explored Florida and Newfoundland, but the coastline in between was still terra incognita. After a subsequent voyage, Giovanni's brother Gerolamo drew the first good map of the Eastern Seaboard. Verrazzano was a true son of the Renaissance, a navigator, astronomer, mathematician, and humanist, whose main interest was geography, not gold. His observations on the natives of North America were sympathetic and anthropologically meticulous. (The only time he used the term "savage" was in describing the Indians of Maine who "made the most disparaging and dishonorable gestures that an uncouth person could possibly do, such as exposing their bare arses to us, all the while howling with laughter.") Giovanni da Verrazzano met a grisly end a few years later, when he was captured by natives on a Caribbean island; Gerolamo watched helplessly from a ship as the Indians on the beach killed his brother, cut him into pieces, and devoured him raw.

The last Verrazzano died in 1819; the property then passed through several other noble Florentine families before coming to the Cappellinis, who acquired, with the castle, the Verrazzano family portraits (including the only known life portrait of Giovanni) and the family archives, armor, furniture, art, and land.

In 1963, before the Verrazano Narrows Bridge was completed, three building stones were chiselled out of the ancient wall of the castle and carried to New York, where they were cemented into the dedicatory monument on the Staten Island side of the bridge. Three smooth water stones were then taken from the site of the bridge, carried back to Chianti, and plastered into the castle wall. Above them a plaque was affixed, stating that Verrazzano's discovery of New York Bay had made possible "a future nation in which his own people and many other races would be made brothers in freedom."

Luigi gives an anniversary dinner every year, in the castle's massive beamed dining room, which commands vertiginous views of the Valle della Greve and the Chiantigian hills. But this time, because of the terrorist attacks in the United States, the mood was different. Luigi ran in the New York City Marathon in November, and at the dinner he spoke about standing on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, among twenty-four thousand other runners, from all over the world, looking toward the hole in the skyline as they awaited the start of the race.

There was a moment of silence for the victims of September 11th. Then Dario Cecchini, who owns a butcher shop in the nearby town of Panzano, rose to speak. Dario has a powerful Tuscan voice and is renowned for spontaneous recitations of Dante to customers in his shop. The room became still as he read a letter that Verrazzano had written to the King of France:

> Serenissimo Re,
>
> After one hundred leagues, we came to a most beautiful spot where an immense river flowed to the sea between two little hills. . . . We sailed up the river with our ship and disembarked onto shore. The land was thickly populated. The Indians were of an aspect similar to the others we have met. They were dressed in bird feathers of many colors and they greeted us happily, with exclamations of great joy and wonder. We went up the river half a league, where we discovered a truly enchanting bay about three leagues in circumference. Moving about busily from one shore to another were some thirty boats overflowing with natives who were curious to see us. We christened the new land "Angoleme" after Your hereditary principality, and the bay enclosed by this land we called "Santa Margarita" after the name of Your sister, who exceeds all other women in intelligence and decency. We left this splendid and hospitable new land with true regret.

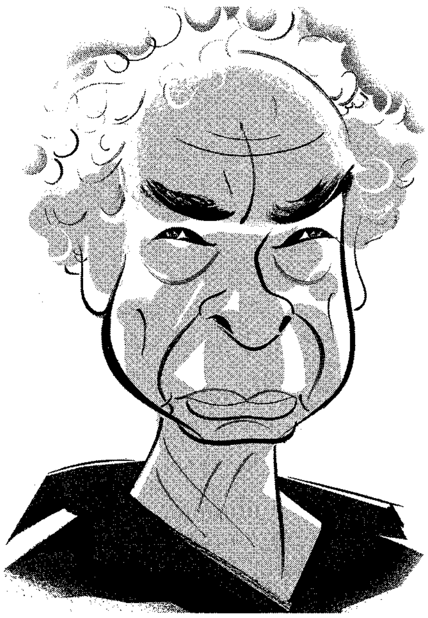
—*Douglas Preston*

THE CREATIVE LIFE
A TROUPE TURNS FIFTY

Sixty people rode the always unpredictable Westbeth elevators to Merce Cunningham's eleventh-floor dance studio on a warm day last month, for the inaugural event in what is shaping up as an eighteen-month celebration of the Cunningham company's fiftieth birthday. It was like an extended-family gathering, with old friends and new bathing in the deep currents of memory and emotion and absurdity that dance, the most ephemeral art, can offer in lieu of more tangible rewards. Several former Cunningham dancers were there, including Valda Setterfield, Meg Harper, and the incomparable Carolyn Brown, who danced with the original company in the summer of 1953, at Black Mountain College, and who has been helping Cunningham re-create some of his early dances for the company's upcoming season at Lincoln Center in late July. Recreating "Suite for Five" (1956) was really hard, she said, "because there were no complete films of it here, and the ones that were taken in Europe were lost."

The guests filed into the main studio to watch Daniel Roberts, a current company member, perform a brief solo called "Totem Ancestor," which Cunningham had made for himself in 1942, at the outset of his career. Full of jagged, feral movements and astonishing jumps, it had been researched from handwritten notes by Roberts when he was a student at Ohio State, and still only dreaming of becoming a Cunningham dancer. Eight dancers then performed a twenty-minute section from "Ocean," the vast, evening-long 1994 work conceived by Cunningham and the composer John Cage, his artistic collaborator and lifelong friend, who died before it was completed. Cunningham is eighty-three. Frail, crippled by arthritis, he still tours the world with his company of sixteen young dancers, and he keeps right on making new dances, the latest of which, called "Loose Time," will have its New York première on the Lincoln Center program. After the excerpt from "Ocean," Cunningham sat at a table in the middle of the room and talked, briefly and with a sort of quiet merriment, about the old dances and the new one. Asked for his thoughts on the 1942 "Totem Ancestor," he simply said, "Well, it seemed longer then."

A few days earlier, discussing the "historical" works that were being revived, he had said, "I try to bring them back the way they were. But the dancers are not the same, and so that's a difference." Could he suggest how his work has evolved over five decades? " 'Suite for Five' is really very bare in its movement," he said. "Someone who saw it many years ago may say it looks bigger now, simply because the dancers have learned how to push movements in a bigger way. But mainly I've stuck to the idea that movement has its own life, that it doesn't need something else with it. When John and I first thought of separating the dance and the music, it was very difficult, because people had this idea about the music supporting the dance rhythmically. I can remember so clearly—in one piece I made some kind of very big movement, and there was no sound at all, but right after it came this incredible sound on the prepared piano, and I understood that these two separate things could make some-



Merce Cunningham

ERIC PALMA

thing that couldn't have happened any other way. That was the beginning of my feeling that this way of working—that there was something to it."

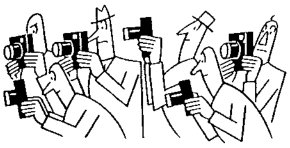
As if it were not challenging enough to re-create old dances, make new ones, and present them on tour in cities around the world during the next year or so, Cunningham has also just published a book. Entitled "Other Animals: Drawings and Journals" (Aperture), it's a collection of pen-and-ink and colored-pencil drawings of birds, animals, insects, and plants that Cunningham does for his own amusement, along with selected entries from his diaries and a few photographs of the company in performance. The drawings are quirky, riveting, and anything but bland—one shows a cheetah strangling a Thomson's gazelle. "I can't seem to make the human shape believable," he said, "so I don't bother." People have often commented on the birdlike or animal-like movements in some of Cunningham's dances. Cunningham, who keeps two cats, once got a postcard from a woman in Florida saying that he was the only human her cat liked to watch on TV.

Curiously, his bird and animal drawings reflect an intimate side of Cunningham that even his closest friends rarely get to see. So do the diary entries. "What is this indescribable event in a dancer's life," one 1972 note reads, "that arises, given all the shit, the terrible hours of work, the grumbling & malaise of a company, the point-of-vertigo fatigue when he one day drops it all & dances . . . and some internal-infernal hook holds one at a peak for those few seconds or, if you are extremely lucky, minutes." And a more recent one, jotted in red ink on the way home from a 1996 engagement in Paris: "Oh, Lord, let me continue a little longer!"

—*Calvin Tomkins*

BIG NIGHT

THE HOT OR NOT GUYS



James Hong and his roommate, Jim Young, who live in Mountain View, California, flew into town last week to attend a promotional party for *Entertainment Weekly's* "It List" issue, the magazine's annual accounting of ineffability in popular culture. James and Jim, who are in their late twenties and have degrees in electrical engineering from Berkeley, are the guys behind last year's "It Web Addiction," Hot or Not, a site where you can post a photograph of yourself and have strangers rate your physical appeal on a scale of one (not) to ten (hot).

James and Jim conceived Hot or Not two years ago, during a bull session about girls, and assumed that only a few friends would ever see it. Since then, more than three million pictures have been posted and more than two billion votes have been tabulated. Initially, James's and Jim's own pictures received disappointingly low scores, but once they added a "Meet the guys that run Hot or Not" link their numbers rose dramatically. James, who is well built and keeps his hair modishly close-cropped, has yet to hook up with a woman through the site. Jim, who is wiry and has long, asymmetrical bangs, has been dating a girl from Florida whom he met after seeing a photo of her on the site dressed as the video-game character Lara Croft.

"This trip is Jim's first boondoggle," James said. They had chosen to stay at the Hudson Hotel, which has a lively bar scene and a T1 line in every room. A highlight of their itinerary was a get-together on Sunday night for local Hot or Not users, which, though sparsely attended, especially by girls, lasted until six the following morning.

The next night, James and Jim arrived at the Milk Studios, on West Fifteenth Street, at eight o'clock sharp, which was when the "It List" party was scheduled to begin.

"Oh my God—these women are all tens," James said, looking around the cavernous space. "Or at least a disproportionate number of them."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but are there a lot of models here?" Jim asked.

There were in fact a lot of models there, along with several of this year's lissome "It List" designees, including Lara Flynn Boyle ("It Villain") and Maura Tierney ("It Spongebath Hotpants"). After a few circuits of the room and several cocktails, James and Jim decided to split up. James set off, while Jim discussed a surefire strategy given to him by a friend back home: approach a hot girl, ask to take her picture, and offer to send it to her, which requires her to give you her e-mail address. Jim tried it out on an attractive brunette, but failed to get her contact information. "Maybe after one more drink," he said

Soon, James returned, with an apple-cheeked blonde named Dawn, who invited them to a lingerie party the next night. Jim, who was drinking vodka and cranberry juice, seemed to have found his courage, and wandered off, camera in hand. James struck up a conversation with an *Entertainment Weekly* assistant named Amy ("A ten plus—totally classy. Way out of my league"), and discovered that they had not only grown up five minutes from one another but were staying at the same hotel. James asked what room she was in.

"Dude! I'm not telling you that!" Amy said.

During a stroll, James noticed a striking-looking older man wearing a white suit, a black mock turtleneck, and aviator glasses. The name Robert Evans meant nothing to James, but when he learned that Evans was the man behind "The Godfather" he wanted to meet him.

Evans was gracious and forthcoming, and he talked about the importance of persevering in the face of adversity. "You know what my problem was?" he said. "I had a loose dick." James nodded, and Evans put an arm around his shoulder. "I want you to listen to me now," he went on. "Any guy that says he understands the mind of a woman is a liar."

After a publicist in a white sleeveless top had whisked Evans away, James confessed that he didn't know much about the man or his work. But, he said, "I really admire anything that's cutting-edge." Later, James and Jim ran into Evans's publicist and got her to pose with them for a picture.

—*Adam Green*

UNDER WHERE?

After a federal appeals court ruled last week that it is unconstitutional to make schoolchildren recite the phrase "one nation under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, we placed a call to Robin Williams, to hear his thoughts on the decision. "Why don't they change it to 'one nation under Canada'?" he said. "Or 'over Mexico'? That way, everybody's happy."

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U.S. JOURNAL

THE DEATH BEAT

What happens when a bunch of obituary writers get together.

BY MARK SINGER

LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO

Carolyn Gilbert has no trouble remembering where she was when she came up with what, in all modesty, she still regards as an excellent idea—the First Great Obituary Writers' Conference. She was in North Dallas, in a bar "a lot like Cheers," with a bunch of like-minded friends, among them a federal judge, a couple of attorneys, and some other professionals, who made a point of getting together once or twice a month. "Sort of like a salon for news junkies" is Gilbert's description of the gatherings of her coterie, which seems somewhat misleading, given that the group spent far less time chewing over the front-page fodder served up by the Dallas *Morning News* than they did indulging their collective fascination with who had died recently and what had been written about them. Gilbert isn't an obituary writer herself (unless you count the one she wrote and sent to five Texas newspapers last winter, after her father, R. C. Milford, Jr., died). She could be most accurately described as an obituary gadfly, a self-selected advocate for obituary writers and readers. Every day, after digesting the obits in the *Morning News*—clipping and filing the ones she might want to refer to later on—she proceeds to read the obituary pages of the *Times*, the Washington *Post*, the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, the Houston *Chronicle*, the Archer County (Texas) *News*, and the Electra (Texas) *Star-News*. Most American newspapers treat obituaries more as a revenue source than as a literary opportunity. The obits in the *Morning News*, for instance, usually take up two pages, but a page and a half of that is occupied by paid obituaries, a gray expanse of pallid prose that, for the most part, sounds as if it had been written by a platoon of undertakers, which it generally is. Gilbert finds this shameful, but she is, by nature, an optimist, and her optimism extends to the future of the obituary, which she believes should be elevated to its proper place as an art form. That belief inspired her spontaneously expressed intention to convene the First Great Obituary Writers' Conference.

"I just said it as a lark," she told me not long ago, when I called to inquire about the upcoming Fourth Great Obituary Writers' Conference. "I'm not even sure what I meant—whether I meant great obituaries, great writers, or great conference." The first one, which took place on a May weekend in 1999, in Archer City (the north-central-Texas destination made famous by the film version of Larry McMurtry's novel "The Last Picture Show"), was a strictly Texas event, to which only obituary writers and editors from the state's major dailies were invited. The Honorable Jerry Buchmeyer, Gilbert's federal-judge friend, gave a speech, sharing selections from his vast collection of obituaries. He also recited excerpts from a compendium of euphemisms for "died": "was ushered to the angels," "passed from this plane to a higher plane," "made his transition," "passed into life's next adventure," "received his final marching orders," "departed this life on his Harley-Davidson," "graduated to phase two of God's eternal plan," "became a handmaiden of God," "was royally escorted into her heavenly home," "teed up for Golf in the Kingdom," and—my favorite—"went fishing with Christ!! on Friday."

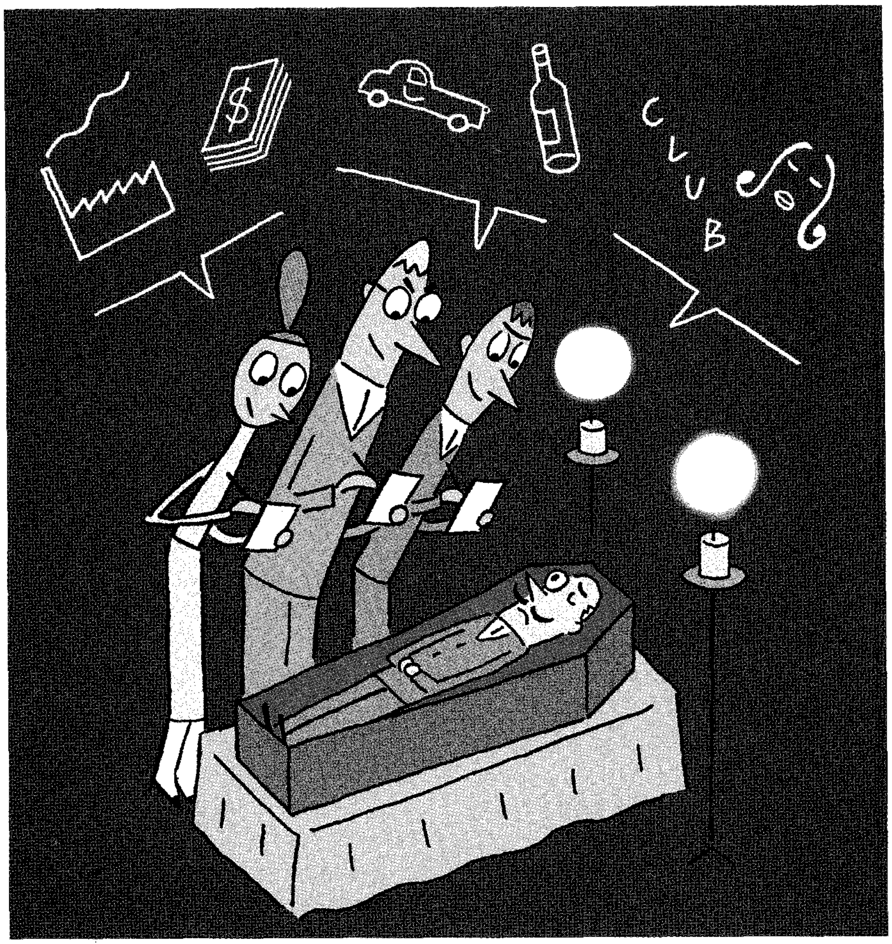
Gilbert's Second Great Obituary Writers' Conference, held in the town of Jefferson, was the occasion for a disquisition on a collection she had begun of paid obituaries of people who had been photographed wearing hats. "I'd noticed that, for some reason, there'd been a rash of all these folks wearing caps from Jim's Truck Stop and the like," she told me. That year's conference generated enough publicity that she began thinking of expanding beyond Texas. She gave her cottage organization a big-sounding name (International Association of Obituarists), and began collecting dues to help support a Web site (www.obitpage.com), a source of memorable obits, reviews of books with obituary-related themes, and practical advice on how to spice up one's death stories. She also founded the Obituarium, which is a word that she and a colleague coined without quite deciding how to define it. "It's conceptual at this point," she said. "It's the name of the concept of everything that gets associated with obituaries—historical, literary, genealogical." (For the moment, the Obituarium doesn't exist, except as a letterhead and a T-shirt.) Meanwhile, friends of Gilbert's had bought and restored a historic hotel in Las Vegas, New Mexico, north of Santa Fe, and she calculated that if the next conference were held there more out-of-staters would show up. That proved true in 2001, so she decided to return for this year's event.

"We're a small but élite group," Gilbert explained when I told her I was thinking of attending. "We really study the art and science of the obituary. The purpose is serious, but we have great fun. This year, we have the added attraction of Nigel Starck, who, even as we speak, is on a round-the-world trip to gather more information about the global obituary." Barring unforeseen circumstances, I promised, I'd be there.

Anyone who paid the hundred-and-thirty-five-dollar conference registration fee, Gilbert decided, would automatically become a member of the International Association of Obituarists. Though I wouldn't be laying out any cash myself, I imagined how I might qualify for membership under some vague grandfather clause. Not only do I turn first to the obituaries in the *Times* each morning; my sense is that I've been reading obits for approximately as long as I've been reading. I vividly recall being seven or eight years old and encountering in my home-town dailies, the Tulsa *World* and the Tulsa *Tribune*, terse accounts of men in their early forties who had "succumbed" to heart attacks.

In the middle of midlife, I read the *Times* obits for pleasure, a pleasure that arises from the contemplation of a completed cycle of accomplishment or notoriety, concisely wrought. An almost conspiratorial escapism animates this daily exercise—my own guilty escape from having to think about, say, trade policy toward China or more bad news on the global-warming front, coupled with an envy of the freshly deceased, who has become immune to tomorrow's probably even worse news. I also make a point of reading the agate-type paid memorial tributes in the *Times*. My preference is for souls I've never heard of. Good for you, I think, whoever you were, whose loved ones loved you so well . . . and special congratulations for dying in the autumn (especially the autumn), amid the drifting leaves (drifting lives?) that will soon mingle with the drifting snow, in deepening, soothing silence.

It long ago occurred to me that my obituary habit derived from the same instinctive curiosity, the same blithe inquisitiveness—O.K., nosiness—that made me a reporter. When I read the obits as a young boy, however, it was with a palpable dread. The death I feared most was my father's, and when he turned forty (I was nine at the time) my worrying intensified. But then, obligingly, he didn't die. Year after year, as I got older he got younger. I kept reading the obits, absorbing subliminal clues about how to live life, while my father and mother both kept offering their own examples. They kept not dying, and at some point I realized that my anxiety about losing them had transmuted into gratitude that they had stuck around for so long.

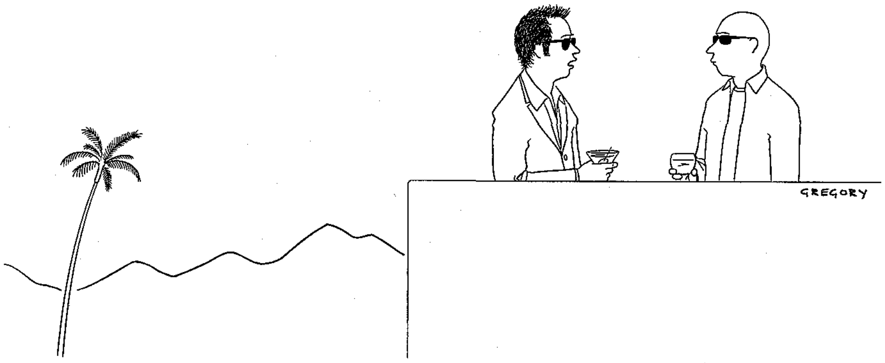


How do you convey that the deceased was a megalomaniac or an unindicted felon?

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

A week before the Fourth Great Obituary Writers' Conference was scheduled to get under way, I flew to Oklahoma for a family gathering. My father had, at last, made his transition, slipped the surly bonds of earth, joined the legions of Oklahoma Sooners football fans in the ultimate luxury skyboxes. Died. Always a charitable person, he had, with characteristic munificence, outlived by more than forty years my primal childhood fear. We gave him a sendoff with far more laughs than tears, spent several days plundering his admirable wine collection, and pronounced ourselves lucky.

Which is why I was in a reflective but not especially sombre state of mind



"I won't attend a benefit unless I know it's for a worthwhile photo spread."

when I arrived at the Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas, where checking in ahead of me was Carolyn Gilbert. Though she's now a freelance public-policy and communications specialist, Gilbert spent many years as a high-school English teacher, and I wasn't surprised to find that she resembled a composite of my high-school English teachers—a neatly groomed sixty-one-year-old woman with big eyeglasses, wavy auburn hair, a pearly North Texas drawl, and a howdy-do affability.

The conference wasn't officially set to begin until the next afternoon, but I got more than a preview during dinner with Gilbert that evening and a post-breakfast conversation with her the next morning. On both occasions, we were joined by Carolyn's daughter and aide-de-camp, Ashlee Gilbert, an aspiring actress and fellow obituary devotee, and by the globe-trotting Nigel Starck, an Australian journalist turned university professor, who was immersed in research for a doctoral dissertation on Australian, British, and American obituaries since the late eighteenth century. Starck's enthusiasm for his subject was such that he couldn't resist scooping his keynote address, which he'd titled "Revival of a Dying Art."

He was particularly eager to share some recently acquired artifacts—photocopies of two October, 1892, articles from the Atlanta *Constitution*, one a deathbed scene starring Caroline Harrison, the wife of the twenty-third President, Benjamin Harrison, and the other a postmortem dispatch that, strictly speaking, wasn't an obituary. " 'Mrs. Harrison's body was laid out in the room in which she died, and this afternoon it was placed in a casket, in which it will finally repose,' " Starck read. "Now, here's the part I like: 'She shows in her emaciation the effects of the long wasting illness of eight months that has reduced her large, matronly figure to a thin, frail form.' "

"That's what I want in my obituary," Carolyn Gilbert said.

"There was a flowering of ornate bereavement in the eighteen-eighties—a Victorian phenomenon," Starck explained. "In the latter part of the nineteenth century, they were extremely graphic and intrusive in their death journalism. They would describe suicides, brains being splattered on the ceiling." But in the nineteen-twenties the obit died—according to the most popular theory, because, after the First World War, people were sick of death. A renaissance didn't occur until the nineteen-eighties, when several British newspapers, notably the *Independent* and the *Daily Telegraph*, decided to treat obituaries like feature stories and hired talented editors to oversee them. Suddenly, the obituary pages offered leisurely narratives, lots of photographs, and a refreshing aversion to hagiography—what Starck calls "the posthumous parallax, a bending of life histories toward all that is light and wholesome, away from anything that might reflect unfavorably on the dead." Hugh Massingberd, a former editor of the obituaries page of the *Daily Telegraph*, recalled the unwieldy challenges posed by a refusal to capitulate to the seductions of the posthumous parallax. "One day, an injunction arrived from on high that we were to make a point of including the cause of death," he reminisced in *The Spectator* last year. "As it happened, a candidate for the morgue of the morrow, a priapic jazzer, had handed in his dinner pail after a penile implant had unfortunately exploded. We duly complied with the editorial diktat." So popular are the *Daily Telegraph's* obituaries that in 1995 the paper began publishing obituary anthologies, and many have been best-sellers.

At too many American newspapers, writing obituaries is considered a second-class calling, the pasture where reporters whose legs have given out are sent to graze before being consigned to even more distant pastures. As it happened, the journalists who attended the conference—from the Denver *Post*, the Arizona *Republic*, the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, the Atlanta *Journal-Constitution*, the Point Reyes (California) *Light*, and the Valencia County (New Mexico) *News Bulletin*—were all natural storytellers who, for various reasons, had volunteered for the obits desk. (The nonjournalists included a married couple who worked for competing Dallas funeral homes, along with several serious amateurs who, à la Gilbert, devote major chunks of their lives to scrutinizing the obits.) With the exception of a presentation by Michael Putzel, a former journalist who is the vice-president of Web operations for the National Obituary Archive, a service that provides what amounts to an Everyperson's cyber-obits database (the dearly departed rendered accessible, in perpetuity, for $29.95), the conference business sessions didn't dwell upon the technical aspects of respectfully memorializing the dead. The main attraction, it seemed, was camaraderie—a chance to swap war stories with other scribblers who have confronted the challenge of summoning the mots justes to convey that the deceased was a megalomaniac or a colorful deadbeat or an unindicted felon.

After the opening session (an effusive, gesticulating performance by Nigel Starck), as the crowd headed toward the bar, I intercepted Susan Little, a college administrator and obituary collector from Georgia, who had brought along a scrapbook filled with some of her favorites. Little traced her fascination with obituaries to having grown up next to a cemetery in Atlanta. Opening the scrapbook, she said, "I've always been very comfortable around death issues. I've taken courses on death, grief, and dying. I started collecting these stories about seven years ago, and this was the first one I saved: William M. Yancy. He was a founding member of Justice for Janitors. It says here, 'He was a pioneer in the recycling business and very enterprising, even before it became fashionable or politically correct. He could not stay still.' There's a novel in there. It's a life that had meaning. And look at this. John Scandalakis. He joined the Greek Resistance during the Second World War, at the age of seventeen. He fought against both the Nazis and the Greek Communists. He was captured by Communists and witnessed the beheading of his father. He was going to be executed the next morning, but he escaped and joined the Resistance movement. I've never had a bad day compared to this man's life. Notice that it says he was surrounded by his family at the time of his death. What a wonderful full circle to have come."

The headline above an obit of an Atlanta numbers racketeer identified him as "Wesley Merritt, Jr., 69, Businessman," and a headline on an adjacent page in the scrapbook said, "Harry Watts, 76, Received His Wish to Die While in Church." Several of Little's keepsakes had been written by Kay Powell, the obituary editor of the *Journal-Constitution*, who was attending the conference for the second consecutive year. Powell's May, 2000, obituary of David Robeson Morgan, Little said, was "the one I've given to more people around the country than any other." It read:

> David Robeson Morgan was a brilliant man whose future looked good, until he had a frontal lobotomy in 1947. . . . "He was such a delightful person. He was bright and articulate. He had a nimble mind both for his age and lobotomy. He was forever inquisitive." . . . His life was spent, his sister said, "struggling with his curtailed brain." . . . One constant in his life was his joy in singing, and he sang tenor in the choirs at the First Baptist churches in Hogansville and in Stockbridge. . . . He also returned to writing. On his word processor, he produced a thirty-thousand-word manuscript on the philosophy of religion.

Stored in Little's computer are obituaries that she's prepared for all her family members—husband, children, parents, siblings. "I've got these things ready," she said, "because when someone dies at two o'clock in the morning and the funeral home's calling to say that the newspaper has to have the obituary, you can't necessarily think coherently. And, yes, I have written my own obit. I left plans with our minister for my memorial service. Willie Nelson will be singing 'Precious Memories,' though probably not in person, because he's about to keel over."

Steve Miller, the editor and publisher (indeed, the entire staff) of *Goodbye! The Journal of Contemporary Obituaries*, also grew up next to a "particularly nice" cemetery, in Montclair, New Jersey, and often hung out there as a teen-ager. But his interest in the literary aesthetics of the dead probably originates in an obit routine at the Paterson *News*, one of several uninspiring newspaper jobs he held in his twenties (he's now forty). "The Paterson *News* had a form we filled out for obituaries," he told me. "And on slow news nights I'd occasionally put fake obituaries in the paper. I followed the form exactly, made them seem innocuous. But I was putting my friends' names on them and giving them unlikely hobbies—like making them Scoutmasters."

A few years later, after a couple more career missteps, Miller wound up on Wall Street (specifically, in the World Trade Center), working for a Japanese bank, and once he reëstablished fiscal solvency he realized that he missed "a creative outlet." He was a regular reader of biographies and, he knew, a skillful writer. The result was *Goodbye!*, an eight-to-sixteen-page all-obituaries illustrated newsletter. "What I've done from the start is cull the best dead people I could find," he said. "Then I do my own research and make the obits more interesting than the standard fare. My ideal obit is somebody you've barely heard of. In the last issue, I did Grover Krantz, the authority on Bigfoot. Everybody knows about Bigfoot, but how many people know about Grover Krantz? So I read his books, researched his career, and developed a point of view about his life that doesn't necessarily adhere to the traditional life trajectory." The result is a droll essay about an obsessed anthropologist laboring at the margins of respectability. "Krantz had a paranoid streak," Miller writes, and "was convinced that many of the giant footprints he documented were faked by people whose motivations he could never understand." Every failure was blamed on the careerism and timidity of his colleagues—"the closed-minded bastards want to run me out of the profession." And the essay ends with an allusion to Krantz's final, crushing rejection: "A physically imposing specimen himself, Krantz nevertheless failed in his last wish to have his body accepted for display at the Smithsonian Museum."

When Miller spoke at the Third Great Obituary Writers' Conference, his theme was the philosophy of the obituary. This year, he talked about September 11th, and how his view of writing obituaries was altered by having been in his office, on the eightieth floor of the World Trade Center's south tower, when the attacks began. Miller was halfway down the fire escape when the second plane hit.

"I've told the story of my escape so many times, in so much depth, it's made me reflect about storytelling and what you can know and what kinds of effects you can try for," he said. "It's fascinating to me how our stories are shaped by our lack of knowledge." Miller's own story of escaping with his life was fashioned in his unawareness that his life was in danger. "Not knowing that it was a major attack, and that hundreds of people were already dead, gave us a confidence and a sense of purpose, sort of like a willful agnosticism.

"Someone told me that the first couple of issues after the attack weren't as humorous as the ones before. I don't know that I'm conscious of that." Actually, the most recent issue is humorous, but its humor is of a very dark kind. And it's also unusually fragmentary. "It's just one anecdote after another, where I'm not even trying to create a narrative." The anecdotes are organized thematically. There are deaths associated with animals ("Newark, NJ—A man who collected monitor lizards, as well as a menagerie of other exotic animals, was discovered half-eaten by the monitor lizards. . . . Spared in the carnage were a bunch of two-inch long Madagascar hissing cockroaches, meant to be the monitor lizards' food"). There are deaths by mayhem ("A man who sawed down a tree in his garden accidentally killed his wife when the tree fell on her. The woman was standing in the street to warn passing cars when the tree crushed her"—the headline is "Timber!"). And there are deaths by "Darwinian Events," including this account, published under the title "What a Knockout," of a young girl's death: "A car knocked down and killed a teenage girl while the driver was distracted by a billboard advertising women's lingerie. The man's car careened onto the pavement when he took his eyes off the road to stare at a giant poster of a woman clad in a revealing bra and panties." Miller is also intrigued by people who live to be more than a hundred and ten years old. "I found out that not much is known about them," he said. "What's most typical is that most of them didn't party and they never went far from home. Clearly, the best way to grow old is never to leave your house."

Two days before the conference, the Dallas *Morning News* had run two different paid obituaries of the same person, along with two different photographs and the announcement of two different funerals. During a morning session on the final day, Carolyn Gilbert deconstructed the two obituaries. The deceased was Melodi Dawn Knapp, a twenty-seven-year-old emergency-room nurse. Each obit had a different list of survivors, and the two funerals were planned, on consecutive days, at different churches—one at a Baptist church, the other at a predominantly gay nondenominational church. An exegesis of the text revealed a lot of piquant information: Knapp's parents were divorced; both had remarried; her father, who evidently had difficulty accepting that his daughter was a lesbian, was affiliated with the Baptist church; her partner was a woman named Tina Merritt. It wasn't clear which funeral would feature an empty casket.

Careful readers had some familiarity with Knapp from a news story in the *Star-Telegram*, which identified her as the driver of a car that, on a Saturday night, had been travelling the wrong way on a Dallas freeway before hitting five other vehicles and killing three other people, including a seven-year-old boy. What neither obit mentioned, of course—and technically couldn't have, because a toxicology report wasn't yet available—was that Knapp had a blood-alcohol reading four times as high as the legal limit.

In light of these complicated facts, it's hard to say where in the Melodi Dawn Knapp story one would situate what Carolyn Gilbert calls the "defining line, an insight into the heart and soul of the life." When the defining line is missing—this is a common pitfall, she says, of paid obituaries—the result is mediocrity, a long list of survivors but not much in the way of color. She addressed this topic during the conference's concluding session, which was held in a classroom on the campus of United World College, a ten-minute drive from Las Vegas, in the town of Montezuma. (One of the school's main benefactors was Armand Hammer, the former chairman of Occidental Petroleum, whose 1990 obituary in the *Times* avoided the posthumous parallax by noting an improper payment to a Soviet Minister of Culture and the suit brought by his own wife after he managed to abscond with part of her art collection.)

By chance, I had with me, in the pouch of my laptop-computer case, a laminated copy of my father's obituary, with the Twenty-third Psalm printed on the other side, a bit of lagniappe from the funeral home in Tulsa. I pulled it out to see whether my brother George, who had written it, had met Gilbert's standard. This was the first time I had focussed properly on the obituary—I hadn't adjusted to the thought of Alex Singer's well-lived life being reduced to eleven column inches and encased in plastic—but now I saw that George had captured our father well. There were two defining lines: "His numerous friends knew him best for his great generosity and his terrific sense of humor," and "His nearly 60-year marriage to Marjorie was the center of his life." In what might have been an oversight, or perhaps a well-intentioned fastidiousness, my brother had omitted the untidy cause of death, emphysema. (Nor was there any reference to our father's having been a cigarette smoker for more than forty years.) The nicest touch, probably, was the photograph—Dad had a particular talent for smiling when photographed—though I regretted slightly, along with one or two other regrets, that he didn't happen to be wearing a Jim's Truck Stop cap. ♦

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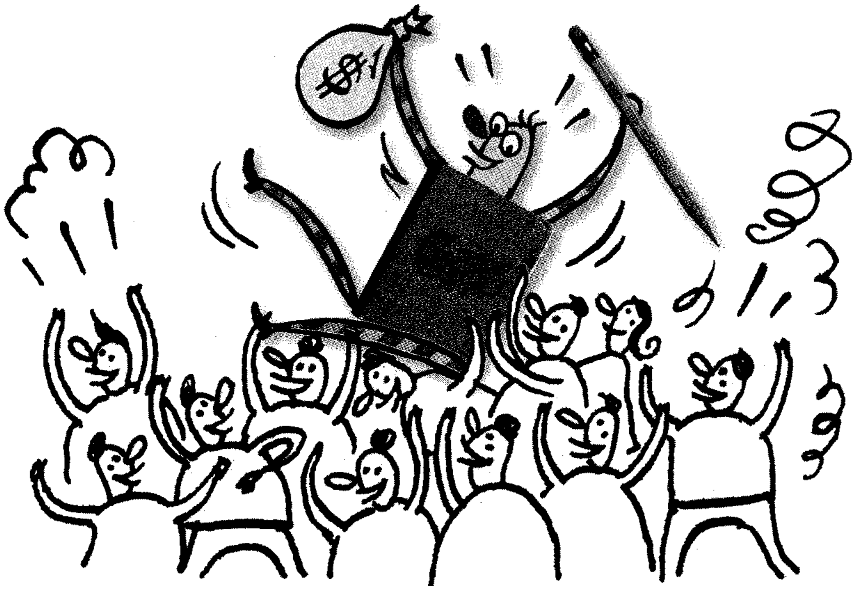
SHOUTS & MURMURS

POPULARITY

BY DAVID OWEN

When I was a child, I wanted to be a cowboy, a soldier, or 007. As I grew older, though, I adopted a more down-to-earth ambition: to become the most popular writer in the history of the world. And yet, in spite of my ambition, I have made little progress. Although I have been a professional writer for twenty-five years, the majority of the people on the planet have never heard of me, or, if they have, the person they have heard of is actually someone else. I would not say that I'm the least popular writer in the history of the world, but I still have a hell of a long way to go. So I have decided, in the years of writing that remain to me, to give away, with every piece of writing that I produce from here on out, the sum of one million dollars.



DAVID GOLDIN

One million dollars! To win this fabulous money, you have only to continue reading this story and provide the correct answers to a few questions concerning my writing and me. The questions are not difficult—or, at least, they won't seem difficult if you have spent the past two and a half decades studying my writing (and me).

Here is the first question: Why have so few of the books I have written reached the top (or bottom) of the *Times* best-seller list? Is it because (a) my books haven't really been all that good; (b) most people prefer to read trash, which my books definitely are not; (c) stupid editors, inadequately trained publicists, imbecilic reviewers, and cretinous readers have repeatedly and totally missed the point of my writing and also failed to do their jobs, which even a child could do better than they do; or (d) I've just had bad luck?

The answer is (d) I've just had bad luck. Did you pick it? If so, great. If not, goodbye, go look at the cartoons, better luck next time! (Yes, that's right, there will be many more chances to make a million dollars, even with short pieces like this—so don't give up!)

The second question: Why have I never written a novel, especially when you consider that writers who do write novels seem to be on easy street when it comes to increasing their popularity? Is it because (a) I can't make things up, but can only tell the truth, no matter how painful; (b) I am too much of a gentleman to humiliate my wife and our children by writing fictionalized accounts of their lives and their (to me) annoying behavior; (c) all the good plots have already been taken; or (d) I just don't feel like it?

The answer is (c) all the good plots have already been taken. Young man dreams of becoming a popular writer, young man "comes of age," young man writes a popular book about coming of age—a universe of plots, all hopelessly used. Birth order is so, so important, not only within families but also in the history of the human race. When William Shakespeare and others were producing their enduringly popular writing, virtually all possible plots were still available. Well. "Regretting, though sometimes popular, is not the same as writing," they say. Farewell, incorrect answerers! Your day may yet come.

There are only a few of you left, and I am not surprised. If I were now as popular a writer as it has long been my ambition to become, even people in foreign countries would be familiar with me and my work, having watched me talking in their own languages on television talk shows in their own countries, and they would have been able to answer the preceding questions even if I had phrased them as fill-in-the-blanks. But let's face it—I am nowhere near that popular yet.

So, for the final question, I am going to ask you lucky few to write a brief essay about me and my popularity, and especially about how the former (me) might increase the latter (my popularity). A word to the wise: outline your ideas before you begin writing. This is not a race. I am far more interested in quality than in quantity, although I am also very interested in quantity. Take some time in your essay to dwell on the aspects of me and my writing that are currently fairly popular and that, with minor tweaking, could become popular on a global scale within a short time. Two other points: I have never felt comfortable writing descriptions of sex organs, and I have no interest in doing the kind of writing that involves climbing Mt. Everest. Also, please concentrate on types of extremely popular writing *that don't take all that long to* produce.

You may begin. ♦

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ANNALS OF CRIME

THE TRENCHCOAT ROBBERS

After fifteen years and twenty-seven banks, they finally tripped up.

BY ALEX KOTLOWITZ

Even those who were close to Ray Bowman didn't know him very well. He led an unadorned life on the outskirts of Kansas City, Missouri, in a small ranch house that he shared with his longtime girlfriend, Jenny Delamotte, their two daughters, and Delamotte's daughter from an earlier relationship. Bowman sold lawnmowers and worked as a private investigator—at least, that's what he told his friends and his family—but he seemed to have a lot of time on his hands. He frequently disappeared for weeks, never telling Delamotte where he was going. When she asked him questions about his business, he would get angry. "I just felt like . . . he had a whole other life outside of me," she later said. One day in January of 1997, Bowman told Jenny to take the girls grocery shopping, which meant that he would be gone when they returned. He then drove across the country to Kent, Washington, where he met up with his partner, Billy Kirkpatrick, at the Pony Soldier Motor Inn.

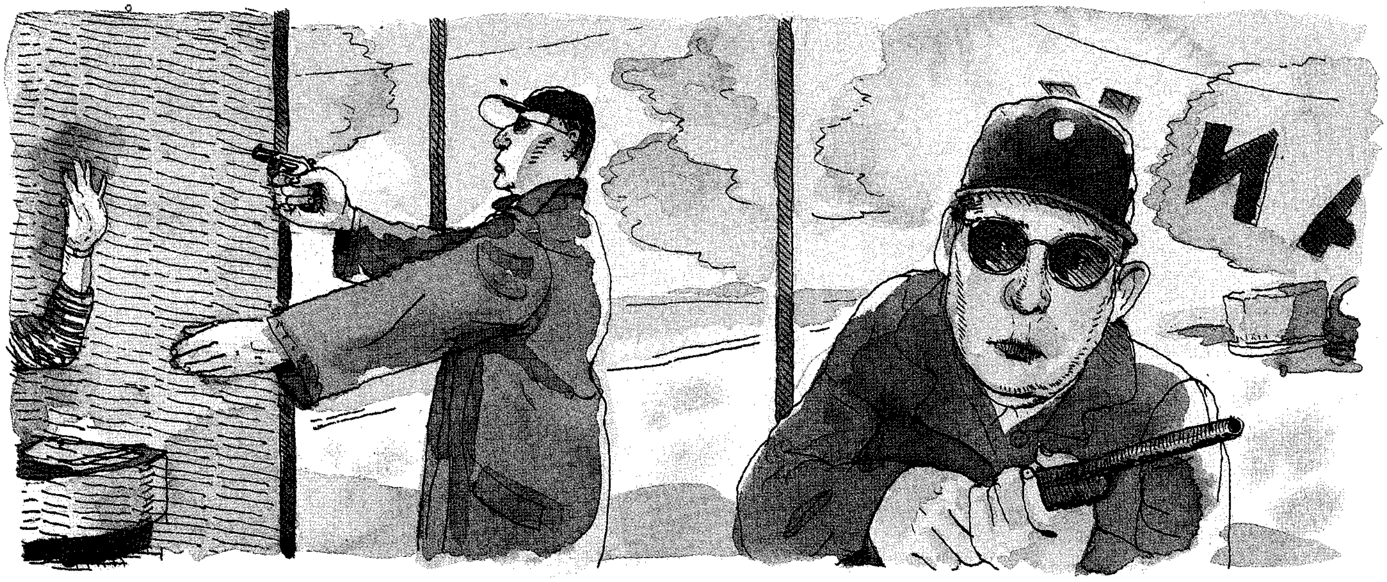
Bowman and Kirkpatrick were an odd match: Bowman was a short, distinguished-looking fifty-three-year-old with sharp features. He had neatly styled salt-and-pepper hair, and he dressed in dark, expensive suits. Kirkpatrick, four years older and more than half a foot taller, wore aviator glasses, and combed his hair straight back. He had sunken cheeks, droopy eyes, and stooped shoulders, which gave him the look of someone who had spent his best years toiling on an assembly line. Bowman liked to banter; Kirkpatrick was taciturn, almost shy. As usual, they rented separate rooms, because Bowman's snoring got on Kirkpatrick's nerves. They ate breakfast together but no other meals.

This was their third trip to the area in four months. On each visit, they spent a few weeks becoming familiar with the comings and goings at Seafirst Bank, a one-story brick building at the end of a commercial strip in Lakewood, a suburb of Tacoma. The two men also occasionally entered the bank—to change a twenty, or to purchase a money order—so they could count the number of employees and learn their routines. Bowman and Kirkpatrick, who were among the most accomplished bank robbers in United States history, were about to pull off their twenty-seventh heist.

Of the seven thousand one hundred and twenty-seven bank robberies in the United States in 2000, the average take was just twelve hundred dollars, and most of the thieves were eventually captured. Bank robberies tend to be committed by inexperienced and desperate people, but Bowman and Kirkpatrick always worked with remarkable preparation and restraint, and they never bragged about their successes. They operated for fifteen years, one year less than Jesse James and his gang, and they robbed an average of two banks annually—always in a different city or town across the Midwest and Northwest. "They're a throwback to the old days," one veteran F.B.I. agent told me. "I hope we don't see anyone like them again." Bowman and Kirkpatrick were finally captured, but only after a number of small, uncharacteristic missteps, which resulted, in large part, from a middle-aged desire to lead more ordinary lives.

Although the F.B.I. didn't know whom they were looking for, the pattern was clear: two men—Mutt and Jeff, one agent named them—would gain entry to a bank either just before it opened or shortly after it closed, when there were no customers present. They usually wore trenchcoats, along with gloves and wigs, and makeup so dark that tellers sometimes identified them as Hispanic or Native American. For the most part, they didn't hurt anyone, although in their third bank holdup, in 1983, in Minneapolis, a teller named Allaire Wilson was shot in the back by Kirkpatrick when she resisted going into the vault;

she was not seriously injured. Despite the shooting, Wilson later told me, the thieves were polite, even thoughtful. After she'd been wounded, Bowman assured her that they weren't going to lock her in the vault. "I always remember he took the time to say that to me," she said. Another time, the pair broke into the home of a bank manager and forced him, his wife, and his fourteen-year-old son, at gunpoint, to drive to the bank. Years later, one of the few details the son remembered was that the shorter robber got him a 7 UP from the bank's vending machine.



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BARRY BLITT

In 1989, shortly after the Trenchcoat Robbers—as the authorities came to refer to them—took four hundred thousand dollars from a Milwaukee bank, F.B.I. agents thought they had their men. Frank Bolduc and Francis Larkin had been arrested for allegedly robbing an armored car in Massachusetts, and an agent noticed that they matched the descriptions given by the bank tellers in Milwaukee; a jury eventually convicted them of the Milwaukee heist and an earlier attempted bank robbery nearby.

Soon after Bolduc and Larkin went to prison, however, two men—one short, the other tall—robbed a bank in Lincoln, Nebraska. A pair of the same description had hit seven more banks by the end of 1994, including the Valley Bank of Nevada in Henderson, where an employee set off an alarm. The robbers took a teller hostage, shoved her into the back seat of a stolen Chrysler sedan, and fled, pursued by the police. Shots were exchanged. Their car disappeared into a nearby housing complex laid out like a maze, which the robbers had apparently scouted earlier, as an escape route. They switched cars behind a bar, let the hostage go, and made off with a hundred and thirty-eight thousand dollars. The F.B.I. had to conclude that either Bolduc and Larkin were part of a bigger gang or the Trenchcoat Robbers were still at large.

In a 1962 mug shot, Ray Bowman, who had been arrested for burglary in Kansas City, scowls at the camera. He is a good-looking eighteen-year-old, with a pompadour and long sideburns. Bowman's father, a cabinetmaker, died when he was twelve; his mother went to work at Hallmark Cards to support Ray and his younger brother, Dan. Bowman dropped out of school in tenth grade, and quickly drifted into the life of a small-time hood, shoplifting, or "boosting," for a low-level mobster named Tiger Cartarella. Cartarella, who was eventually killed in a Mob hit, distributed "shopping lists" to the teen-agers: record albums, watches, tennis racquets, whatever was currently in demand. They stole the goods, and he fenced them. But Bowman was careful never to boost in Kansas City. "Ray used to say, 'You don't shit in your own back yard,' " recalled one of his former accomplices, who travelled as far as Wisconsin and Colorado with Bowman. Everyone wanted to steal with Bowman, the friend explained, because he was unflappable and closemouthed: "Ray wouldn't tell you his middle name, unless you said it first."

During Ray Bowman's days as a shoplifter, he had hooked up with a young man named Billy Kirkpatrick, also a high-school dropout. They began boosting together, wearing oversized pants and trenchcoats to conceal the items they stole. They were arrested only once, in Springfield, Missouri, in 1974, where they were caught with thirty-eight record albums stolen from a K mart. By the mid-nineteen-eighties, Bowman and Kirkpatrick had stopped hanging out together in public, since friends had begun to wonder where they got all their cash.

For much of the eighties, Bowman was a big-spending, hotheaded bachelor. According to Cheryl Clark, a blackjack dealer who lived with him in those years, he indulged in limousines, cocaine, eight-hundred-dollar dinners, silk shirts, and cologne. (One bank teller told police, "He smelled really good.") Bowman also harbored strong anti-government sentiments and amassed a collection of guns and survivalist literature. One bedroom in the house was double-locked, and only Bowman had a key. "I didn't ask any questions, 'cause he'd get so upset I thought he was going to hit me," Clark said. When the two split up, in 1989, he confiscated the diaries in which she had noted the dates he was out of town.

In 1990, Bowman, then forty-six, met Jenny Delamotte, a self-effacing twenty-six-year-old single mother who worked at a bar. Before long, Delamotte and her daughter moved in with Bowman; two years later, she and Bowman had their first child, Samantha, who was followed by another daughter, Taylor. The children seemed to settle Bowman. He drove the kids to and from private school, and often accompanied them on field trips. He taught himself Spanish as Samantha was learning it in school. He also read voraciously, and became serious about photography. He traded his Corvette for a Crown Victoria, Delamotte said, and became a "homebody."

In the fall of 1996, Ray Bowman called his brother, Dan, for the first time since 1985, when they had quarrelled over Dan's refusal to store a footlocker for him. In the meantime, Dan had prospered in Kansas City, where he sold real estate and had opened Sidekicks Saloon, a successful gay bar. "I was thinking he wanted to borrow money," Dan said. Instead, Ray asked his brother to be the executor of his will. After the brothers reconciled, it surprised Dan to see how frugally Ray and Jenny were living. Their one-story home, which they rented for eight hundred dollars a month, was so modest that Delamotte had to cover a hole in the kitchen linoleum with a throw rug. "There was so much they did without," Dan told me.

Kirkpatrick, meanwhile, had been caught trying to steal a car in southern Illinois. He posted bail and fled, briefly, to Kansas City, where he assumed the identity of a bar owner named Charles Gehrs. Kirkpatrick eventually found his way to Minneapolis, where he and his girlfriend, Myra Penney, also began to build a quieter life.

Penney is seventeen years younger than Kirkpatrick, and barely comes up to his shoulder. She has wavy red hair, and a brassy manner. Penney told me that she got to know Kirkpatrick through a friend and immediately fell in love. At the time, she was recently divorced and working as a school-bus driver to support her two young children. When Kirkpatrick left Kansas City, she decided to follow him, and left her children with their father. She didn't communicate with her family for nearly ten years.

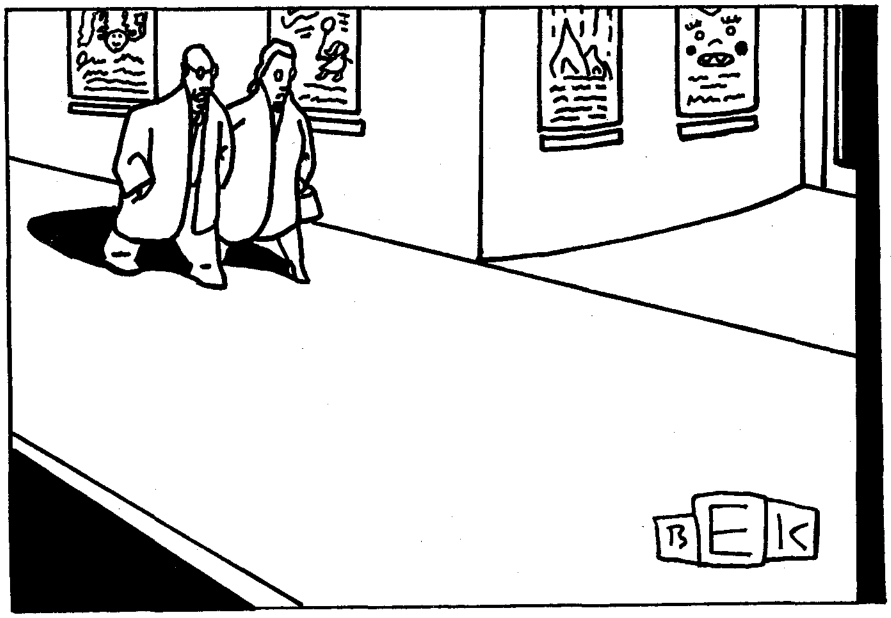
Penney was the only person who knew about Kirkpatrick and Bowman's line of work. When Kirkpatrick returned from his trips, Penney went through the motel and rental-car receipts to make sure he hadn't been overcharged—and then burned them in the fireplace. She also enrolled the two men in the Holiday Inn Priority Club so they could take advantage of the chain's discounts. Penney never met the man she knew only as "Ray from Kansas City," though she and Kirkpatrick kept a photograph of Bowman's two daughters on the refrigerator.

In 1988, when Kirkpatrick was scouting a bank in Duluth, he and Penney became smitten with the rugged coast of Lake Superior. Six years later, they decided to build a log home eighteen miles from the Canadian border, in Hovland, Minnesota, a town that consists of one convenience store and a gas pump. They hired a local builder, Michael Senty, and with him designed a three-level, cedar-log home by the water. Penney paid Senty mostly in cash—in fifty- and hundred-dollar bills, wrapped in rubber bands and delivered in brown lunch bags. "I was led to believe that she inherited the money," Senty said.

In the summer of 1995, the couple settled in. Kirkpatrick had taken on yet another identity, and was introducing himself as Don Wilson, although Penney always referred to him as "big guy" rather than risk using the wrong name. To explain why he was away so often, Penney told friends that he owned warehouses and a locksmithing business; in 1989, Kirkpatrick had, in fact, taken a fifty-two-lesson mail-order course through Foley-Belsaw, one of the leading locksmithing schools. Penney spent much of her time tending a greenhouse vegetable garden and stitching quilts; when Kirkpatrick was home, he worked on a stone path to the lake and practiced his locksmithing skills in the basement. Kirkpatrick grew so comfortable in Hovland that for the first time since Penney had known him he stopped carrying a gun.

Kirkpatrick and Penney became good friends with a younger couple, Randy and Monica Schnobrich, and often babysat for their two small children. "I always had this feeling that they were spending more money more freely than they'd ever done before," Randy said. "But we thought, Things are different up here, so we'll just trust them." There were a few mysterious moments, though. Once, Randy came into the house to use the phone, and saw Kirkpatrick slip an empty holster off the kitchen table. And when Randy took a photograph of Kirkpatrick and Penney sitting on the couch with his four-year-old son, Sebastian, between them, they both hid their faces behind the little boy.

By the spring of 1996, the Lake Superior home was almost complete. Penney hounded Senty about the final adjustments so relentlessly that, angered by her badgering, he placed an anonymous call to the Internal Revenue Ser-



"When did movies start being dumb all year round?"

vice and reported that a woman named Myra Penney had paid for a home in Hovland entirely in cash.

The following January, Kirkpatrick joined Bowman in Washington, to rob the Seafirst Bank. Using a set of manufacturers' master keys that Kirkpatrick had bought through the mail by posing as a locksmith, the two men stole a Jeep Grand Cherokee. At six-thirty on the evening of February 10th, just after closing time, Kirkpatrick and Bowman drove to the bank and used a thin, L-shaped tool to open the locked front door. Both men were wearing trenchcoats buttoned at the collar, sunglasses, and baseball caps with the F.B.I. insignia; Kirkpatrick was also wearing an earpiece that was connected to a police scanner in his coat pocket. There were three women in the bank when the men entered with their guns drawn.

"I came for your money," Bowman declared. Then he put his pistol back in his coat pocket, warning the women that if they didn't do everything he said, he would take a hostage. The two men herded the tellers into the open vault, which contained a metal cart with a Plexiglas top, loaded with money. "Look at all that cash!" Kirkpatrick exclaimed. He bound the tellers' wrists with plastic electrical ties and ordered them to close their eyes while Bowman pried open the padlocked compartments on the cash cart and began stuffing duffel bags with bills. One of the tellers explained that since her husband hadn't heard from her he might come by the bank. "Don't worry," Bowman assured her, "we'll be long gone." Before leaving, they tied the women's ankles to a table. Then they walked out of the bank with three hundred and fifty-five pounds of cash.

As soon as the two men drove away in their stolen car, one of the tellers freed herself and set off the alarm. As it turned out, this branch took daily deposits from other branches, as well as from a nearby Indian casino. Bowman and Kirkpatrick had stolen four million four hundred and sixty-one thousand six hundred and eighty-one dollars—the largest take in United States history.

The F.B.I. immediately suspected the Trenchcoat Robbers. Agents made contact with every hotel on the I-5 corridor, and stopped rush-hour traffic to ask commuters whether they'd noticed anything suspicious near the bank. When they found the getaway car, a week later, it was cleaner than when it had been stolen; there was no evidence of tampering, and they couldn't even detect the owner's fingerprints, let alone the fingerprints of the robbers.

Bowman and Kirkpatrick spent the night of the heist at a motel in Portland, Oregon, and then split up, each taking half the money. On his way back to Kansas City, Bowman deposited much of his share in bank safe-deposit boxes in Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Missouri; Kirkpatrick drove two days to a Holiday Inn in Egan, a Minneapolis suburb, where he met Penney to celebrate Valentine's Day. "He came in in the middle of the night," Penney recalled. "He had four or five duffels, and I asked him if it was what I thought it was. He was smiling." They went for dinner at the Napa Valley Grille in the Mall of America and drank two bottles of Dom Perignon. Kirkpatrick never said how much money was in the duffels. "Only once, when we were up north," Penney told me, "he said that we had enough money to last the rest of our lives. I was just so happy that maybe he wouldn't have to do it anymore."

The spring of 1997 was a quiet interlude for both men. Bowman spent time with his children and shopped for books and expensive clothes. He threw Dan a surprise birthday party at a steak house. "It was the first time my brother had ever done anything for me," Dan said. "He turned into this very caring person." In Hovland, Penney worked in her garden and Kirkpatrick continued to work on the stone path, using a new six-wheel all-terrain vehicle. "There was this sense they were finally settled," Randy Schnobrich recalls.

In the meantime, the F.B.I. posted a hundred-thousand-dollar reward and convened its third conference in eight years about the case which was now called Trenchrob. Agents from eighteen cities gathered in Tacoma to compare notes.

For twenty-one years, Billy Waters worked as a special agent with the Criminal Investigation Division of the I.R.S. An unassuming, slightly built man in his fifties, Waters had asked the I.R.S. to assign him to its two-agent Duluth office because he loved to hunt and fish. When state headquarters relayed the anonymous tip about Penney, he reviewed the filings for local Currency Transaction Reports, which every bank must file for cash transactions of more than ten thousand dollars. They showed that a log-home builder named Michael Senty had deposited a hundred and seventy-four thousand dollars in cash. When he discovered that Penney had never filed tax returns, he got a subpoena for her to appear before a grand jury.

On the afternoon of August 12, 1997, Waters appeared in the driveway of Kirkpatrick and Penney's home and introduced himself. Penney told Waters she wouldn't answer any questions until she had talked to an attorney. Penney told me that after Waters left she showed Kirkpatrick the subpoena: "Billy cracked open a beer. I opened a bottle of white Zinfandel and took a glass, went and sat by the lake, and cried. We didn't know what it was they wanted."

Over the next few days, Kirkpatrick and Penney gathered up the locksmithing tools, the blank keys, and the key-making machine, and tossed everything into a Dumpster. Kirkpatrick then collected their cash from safe-deposit boxes and drove to Las Vegas, where he put it in a storage locker. While Kirkpatrick was gone, Bowman called. "Uncle Tom's been here," Penney told him. "Uncle Tom" was their code for law enforcement.

"You got to be kidding me," Bowman replied.

"No."

"Your phone's no good," Bowman said and hung up.

Actually, *his* phone calls were being monitored, but not because the F.B.I. suspected that he was a bank robber. Three months earlier, Bowman, who had rented a storage locker in Kansas City under a pseudonym, had missed his rental payment. The managers of the facility, unable to reach him, pried open two footlockers and found a cache of suspicious material: pamphlets and videos with titles like "Expert Lock Picking," and "B. & E.: A to Z—How to Get in Anywhere, Anytime," various books on disguises, and what appeared to be parts for a silencer. When Bowman finally came in to pay his overdue bill, an employee jotted down his license-plate number and passed it on to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. An A.T.F. agent named Paul Marquardt, who examined the locker's contents, immediately thought the bureau was dealing with a "Tim McVeigh type," and so the local police, six months later joined by the F.B.I., put Bowman under surveillance.

Bowman must have sensed that he was being followed. According to Delamotte, he began reading a book on money laundering, and then one midnight in October he showed up unannounced at his brother's home with two locked leather satchels. He asked Dan to keep the bags for him, assuring him that it wasn't drug money. Later, he told him that the contents of the satchels were for his daughters should anything ever happen to him.

After Waters's visit, Kirkpatrick and Penney heard nothing more from the I.R.S. for three months and assumed that they were no longer under suspicion. In fact, Waters had tracked down Myra Penney's mother, in Kansas City, and she had told him that her daughter was living up north, with a man named Billy Kirkpatrick. Waters then uncovered Kirkpatrick's arrest record, but he found no history of narcotics in his or Penney's background to account for the large amounts of cash. He thought that they might be jewel thieves.

That autumn, Kirkpatrick grew increasingly worried that someone might break into his Las Vegas storage locker and steal his money—an understandable concern, given his vocational training. In November, he flew to Las Vegas, emptied the locker, and began the drive back home. On Interstate 80, just outside Lincoln, Nebraska, a state trooper stopped him for driving seven miles over the speed limit. Kirkpatrick, who produced a driver's license in the name of Don Wilson, said that he was a locksmith and that he had flown to Las Vegas to drive his niece to Denver. But the trooper was skeptical. Searching the rental car, the officer found four guns and two bags of fake mustaches, a key-making machine, and locksmith tools. He also discovered, in two padlocked footlockers, nearly two million dollars in cash.

Kirkpatrick was arrested for possession of firearms, but the F.B.I. suspected that he might be one of the Trenchcoat Robbers, since some of the money was easily traced to the Seafirst Bank. In Duluth, an agent who knew of Billy Waters's interest in a Don Wilson showed him composite sketches that had been made after two robbers held up a bank there in 1988; Waters identified the taller one as Billy Kirkpatrick.

Kirkpatrick, meanwhile, had got word of his arrest to Penney, with whom he had made plans for this eventuality: she was to change her identity and flee to Seaside, Oregon, one of their favorite vacation spots. Instead, she drove to Lincoln and posted a hundred-thousand-dollar bond for Kirkpatrick. "My heart got the best of me," she said. She was arrested at the Lincoln courthouse, and charged with aiding and abetting. Penney agreed to coöperate with the F.B.I., and told the agents that Kirkpatrick's partner was named Ray and lived in Kansas City.

An examination of Kirkpatrick's arrest records revealed that he and Bowman had worked together as shoplifters, and a search of his home in Hovland turned up three trenchcoats. The only piece of evidence connecting the two men, however, was the picture of Bowman's children on the refrigerator; it matched photos that police had recovered from Bowman's trash. A few weeks later, Kansas City police arrested Bowman as he walked into a Flash Photo to drop off film he'd taken of his daughter Taylor's school trip to a farm.

In an F.B.I. search of Bowman's home, twenty-seven agents were called in to sift through the heap of boxes and papers in the basement. Among other things, investigators found blank car keys, four gray wigs, makeup remover, cans of temporary hair color, a police-frequency directory, ninety-seven thousand dollars in cash, and sixty-seven firearms. The most incriminating items, however, were two scraps of paper: on one, Bowman had scribbled the license-plate number of the janitor who cleaned the Seafirst Bank; on the other, he had written the date of a piano recital that he apparently hoped to attend at the University of Washington—which placed him in the vicinity of the Seafirst Bank a few months before the robbery.

The statute of limitations had expired for many of the Trenchcoat heists. Kirkpatrick was charged with three robberies, including the Seafirst. A Nebraska judge ruled that the search of Kirkpatrick's car was illegal, thus making the evidence inadmissible (though it could be—and was—used against Bowman). Nevertheless, Penney persuaded Kirkpatrick to plead guilty, and to coöperate with the F.B.I. He refused to name his accomplice but did admit that he had worked with the same partner each time. Over five days, he walked the agents through a number of the robberies—including a few that had not been on the F.B.I.'s Trenchrob list—and the agents, in turn, walked Kirkpatrick through part of their investigation. "It was like the masters comparing notes," one person who attended these debriefings recalled.

Kirkpatrick told the agents that he and his partner sometimes broke into a bank at night and slept there, to surprise the employees when they entered the next morning. He explained that he and his partner planned escape routes that involved only right-hand turns so that they wouldn't get stuck in traffic. He said they wore matching outfits so that the tellers' memories of them would blend together. And he recounted in detail how he and his partner had committed the two robberies for which Frank Bolduc and Francis Larkin had been convicted, eight years earlier. (Those convictions were subsequently overturned.) On August 19, 1999, Kirkpatrick was sentenced to fifteen years and eight months.

The charges against Myra Penney in Nebraska were dropped; she pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering in Minnesota and was sentenced to three years' probation. Shortly before her sentencing, Penney went back to Hovland and sat by the lake with Randy Schnobrich. "I half miss you and I'm half pissed off at you," he told her. (He had dug up some bulbs that Penney and Kirkpatrick had planted in front of his house, thinking, he said, "Maybe there's the mother lode.") Penney drove to the log home, which has since been auctioned off, and picked some daffodils she had planted. It angered her that the Duluth papers described the house as a "hideaway." Kirkpatrick "built that house out of love for me," she said. "It irks me that they twist it."

Penney now works as a front-office manager at a hotel in Minneapolis. In a letter, Kirkpatrick asked Penney to marry him, but, she said wistfully, "Fifteen years is a long time."

Delamotte has always maintained that she knew nothing about the bank robberies. At the first of Bowman's two trials, in June, 1998—for possession of silencer parts—she burst into tears when she heard that Bowman had secreted away nearly two and a half million dollars in safe-deposit boxes around the country. "She had to go to him for everything," Paul Marquardt, the A.T.F. agent, said. "Like a little girl getting her allowance." From jail, Bowman cryptically asked Delamotte, "Have the children eaten their oatmeal?" Jenny looked in the bottom of the oatmeal box and found keys to yet more safe-deposit boxes. She turned them over to Bowman's attorney.

When Bowman was arrested, Dan took the two locked satchels he was storing to a friend's house, so that he could honestly tell investigators that he had nothing of his brother's. But, in the end, he decided to hand them over to the authorities. It turned out that each bag contained two hundred and forty thousand dollars. Dan had many sleepless nights after that. "I felt like I betrayed him," he said. One of the bundles of money had a stamped band from the Seafirst Bank which was used as evidence when Ray was tried for robbing Seafirst and four other banks.

At that trial, which involved a hundred and eight witnesses and more than three thousand evidence exhibits, Bowman was convicted and sentenced to twenty-four years and six months. Dan was called as a witness, and, as he testified about his reconciliation with his brother, he broke down. Ray, sitting at the defense table, pounded his heart with his right hand and mouthed the words "I love you."

Ray Bowman's reticence was not tempered by his arrest. "I wonder how many things they did that we didn't know about," Marquardt said to me. Bowman and Kirkpatrick's accumulated wealth could be accounted for only roughly, and one prosecutor believes that there still may be more money to be found: indeed, eighteen months after Bowman's conviction, a bank not far from his home was relocating and opened an unclaimed safe-deposit box in which the bank's staff found seven thousand five hundred and fifty dollars in cash, seven handguns, and some loose diamonds; the authorities immediately traced it back to Bowman.

I was permitted to visit Bowman at a small, privately run detention center in Leavenworth, Kansas. (He has since been moved to the federal penitentiary there.) We met in a bare, fluorescent-lit visiting room, where we sat in plastic chairs, knee to knee, his court-appointed attorney sitting to the side. Bowman is fifty-seven, but he looked much older. He was flaccid—almost plump—and his complexion pasty. He wears his reading glasses all the time so that they won't get stolen. Nervous laughter punctuated his answers, and he seemed self-conscious about the effect of his words.

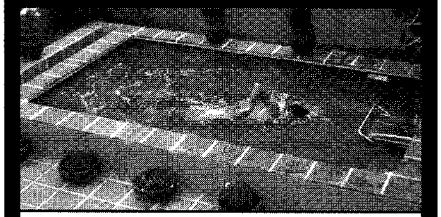
Explaining why he agreed to meet with me, he said, "This is a chance to, I guess, be me, and maybe they'll say I'm not a monster." Questions about the bank robberies or about Kirkpatrick were off limits, because at the time Bowman was appealing his first conviction. (He has since exhausted all his appeals but continues to refuse to discuss his case.) So he talked of his lawnmower business, which he said "never got the chance to get going anywhere," and of reading Plato, which he confessed was "going awful slow." He spoke of his daughters, pausing to remove his glasses and wipe away tears. Delamotte has told them their daddy's in prison because "he broke a rule." She has since moved to Georgia with their children.

At one point, Bowman's attorney blurted out, "How did you not tell anyone?" But Bowman said nothing. Whoever had robbed those banks, I said, had been really good at what he did.

"Whoever," Bowman replied, laughing.

"The F.B.I. had grudging admiration for whoever did it," I told him.

"I find that curious," he said, with a barely perceptible smile that suggested he may still know a few things the rest of us don't. ♦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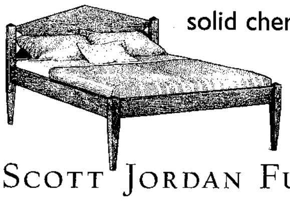
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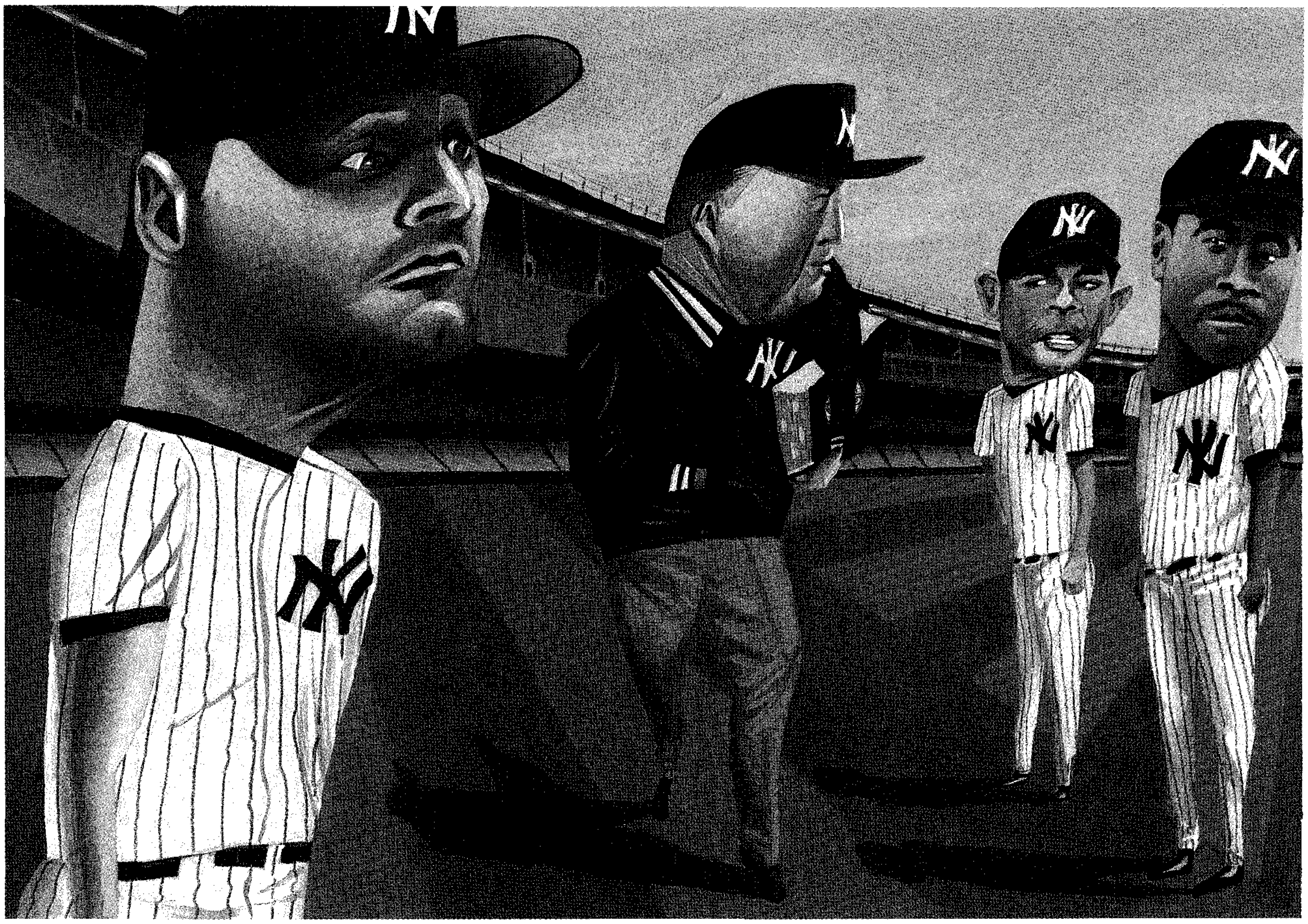


THE SPORTING SCENE

YANKEE IMPERIALIST

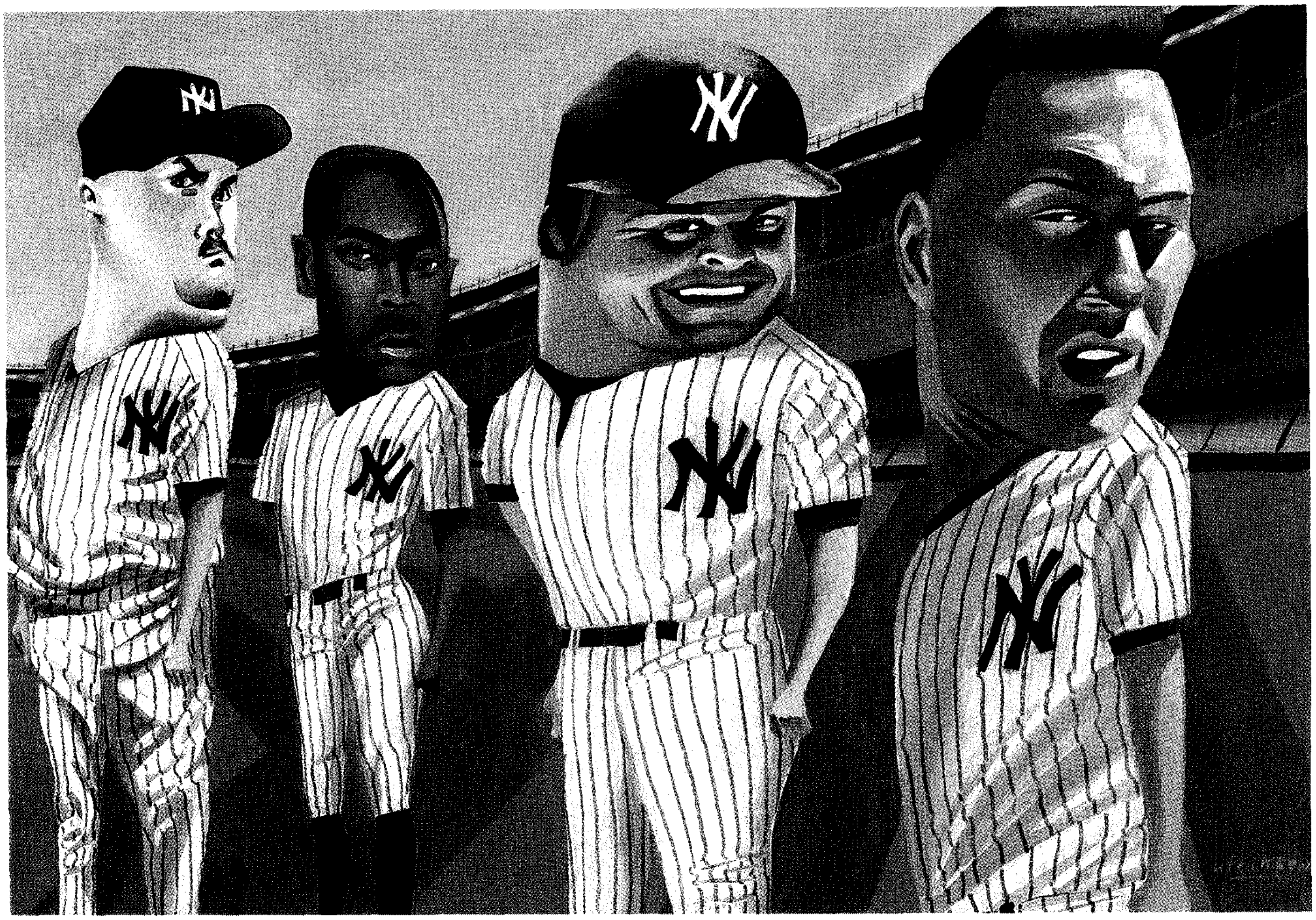
For much of his career, George Steinbrenner was regarded as a hateful despot. Now he has engineered his own redemption.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

George M. Steinbrenner III, the principal owner of the New York Yankees, was born and brought up outside Cleveland, Ohio, where his family owned a shipping business, but for the past twenty-five years he has lived in Tampa, Florida, and that is where he spends most of his time. His main office is at Legends Field, the Yankees' spring-training complex, which is at 1 Steinbrenner Drive, a couple of miles east of Tampa International Airport. Steinbrenner isn't overburdened with false modesty, but he isn't without a sense of humor, either. In the hallway outside his office, there is a fake poster for the movie "Analyze This," with him in the Robert De Niro role of the mafioso seeing a shrink. "Imagine This," the poster says. "You're analyzing the Boss of the Yankees. His forty-five minutes is up, and you've got to tell him to go." I was pondering this predicament one day a few months ago when Steinbrenner came out and shook my hand. He is about six feet tall and his broad shoulders and barrel chest give him an imposing presence. He was dressed Palm Springs circa 1964: shiny leather shoes, pressed tan slacks, a blue-and-white oxford shirt, and a navy-blue windbreaker with the Yankees' "NY" emblazoned on the left breast. A big diamond-encrusted World Champions ring obscured his wedding-ring finger, and his gray-brown hair was combed back. Despite the sharpness of his own attire, he seemed disconcerted by my jacket and tie. "We dress down around here," he said, almost apologetically. "Take your tie off. Relax."

Legends Field is a mini-replica of Yankee Stadium. It opened in 1996, with space for ten thousand spectators and a dozen luxury boxes. Hillsborough County paid about thirty million dollars to lure the Yankees from Fort Lauderdale, their former pre-season base. The taxpayers' money allowed Steinbrenner to create a Yankees theme park in his adopted home town, featuring palm trees, a duck pond, and a memorial garden commemorating the club's heroes, from Babe Ruth to Don Mattingly, which, in a fitting marriage of tradition and commerce, is next to a Yankees-merchandise store.

Steinbrenner, who has just turned



seventy-two, keeps track of everything that happens at Legends Field. "I just got this put down," he said, pointing to a green baize carpet that led from the locker room to a practice field. "Before, we had guys walking along here in spikes on concrete. One slip and they'd be out. Now they won't be in danger of injuring themselves." We walked to Steinbrenner's dark-blue BMW sedan, which was parked under the grandstand. As he drove us out into the sunlight, we passed a frail, elderly figure in a wheelchair. Steinbrenner opened his window.

"How you doing today?" he asked.

"Not so good," the man replied. "I'm waiting to go see the doctors."

"Why, you look like a thousand dollars. I'll see you this afternoon when you get back."

The man stared at us forlornly. "If I get back," he said.

"That's Cliff Lewis, one of the first quarterbacks of the Cleveland Browns," Steinbrenner said, closing the window. "He's just had some heart trouble. He almost died, but we got him back. We got him a pacemaker put in, and he got out of the hospital a few weeks ago." Lewis has worked in the Yankees' insurance department for many years. He once tried retiring, but he didn't like sitting around, and his wife called Steinbrenner and asked if he could return to work. Steinbrenner readily agreed. "When you send guys home and tell them to take it easy, that's like saying, 'Your days are numbered,'" he explained.

At Malios, an Italian restaurant frequented by Yankees officials and players, the owner and several patrons crowded around to shake Steinbrenner's hand. "I just want you to know that I do not seek the publicity," Steinbrenner said once we were seated in a corner booth. "I really am trying to retire and let the young elephants into the tent—get semi-retired, anyway." For years, Steinbrenner has talked about handing over the running of the Yankees to his two sons and his son-in-law, but nobody takes much notice. During the off-season, he committed more than two hundred million dollars to strengthening the Yankees' already formidable roster. Still, he appeared to be serious. "I think that any guy who is going to retire finds it very difficult," he continued. "But there's a time when you have to do it." This is Steinbrenner's thirtieth year in charge of the Yankees, so it is not surprising that he is thinking about the future. "I just want what the kids are going to inherit to be in good hands, and what my partners have to be in good hands, if I start to tail back a little," he explained. "Instead of coming in at seven-thirty in the morning, maybe I'll come in at nine-thirty or ten." Steinbrenner's talk of retirement has prompted rumors that he

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ULRIKSEN

Steinbrenner with his players: from left, Roger Clemens, Mariano Rivera, Bernie Williams, David Wells, Alfonso Soriano, Jason Giambi, and Derek Jeter. The Yankees' payroll added up to a hundred and twenty-five million dollars this year.

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might be ill, but he appears to be in good shape. He rarely drinks and doesn't smoke; he works out three times a week; and he watches his weight, which, at two hundred and four pounds, is just four pounds more than he weighed in college.

If Steinbrenner were to retire now, he would leave behind an immensely valuable bequest. In the past six years, the Yankees have won the World Series four times, and reëstablished their position as the leading club in baseball. At the same time, Steinbrenner has extended his sporting interests to encompass hockey (the New Jersey Devils), basketball (the New Jersey Nets), and cable television (the new YES Network), combining these assets in a powerful regional sports conglomerate, YankeeNets. He also is something of an elder statesman. Earlier this year, as vice-president of the U.S. Olympic Committee, he helped preside over the American team's triumphant efforts in Salt Lake City.

New Yorkers can resist anything except success, and the Yankees' success has done wonders for Steinbrenner's public image. When critics attack him today, it is usually on account of the Yankees' dominance. With an annual payroll of a hundred and twenty-five million dollars, almost three times the payrolls of clubs like the Kansas City Royals and the Oakland Athletics, the Bronx Bombers are tough to compete against. Growing financial disparities are an important issue in baseball, but they don't trouble Yankees fans, most of whom are overjoyed that Steinbrenner has restored the regular parades up lower Broadway that they regard as part of their birthright.

For Steinbrenner, it is an astonishing turnaround. Just a decade ago, he was widely regarded as a loathsome tyrant, whose endless management reshuffles had degenerated into a bad joke. He was even featured on "Seinfeld," where he terrorized George Costanza, who had taken a job with the Yankees. In July, 1990, when he was forced to resign from baseball temporarily after admitting that he had paid a professional gambler for damaging information about one of his own players, the Yankees were in last place in the American League East; they hadn't made it to the post-season in nine years, and the Mets had displaced them as the most popular team in New York. News of Steinbrenner's departure prompted cheers from the Grand Concourse to Sheepshead Bay.

Many factors went into Steinbrenner's redemption: gifted managers and players, savvy trades, money, luck, and his own long-overdue maturing. Although he can still act capriciously from time to time, he is calmer than he used to be, and less likely to fly into a rage. A few days before we met, he had gone into the locker room and found David Wells, the pitcher whom he signed in the off-season, and who was supposed to be on a diet, eating a doughnut. Instead of berating Wells, as he might well have done in the past, Steinbrenner went to a Krispy Kreme outlet the following day and picked up a paper hat. He wore the hat into the locker room and presented it to Wells, saying, "Wear it, but remember—don't eat them when you're wearing it."

While we were talking, the owner of the restaurant brought out a cholesterol-packed fried-crabmeat salad that he had made himself. Steinbrenner protested halfheartedly, but then tucked in, saying, "Jesus, this is good." A little later, he spotted a friend and called him over. "I want you to meet the monsignor," he said. "He used to be a great soccer player." Monsignor Laurence Higgins, a ruddy-faced Irishman in his early seventies, works at St. Lawrence Roman Catholic Church, just north of Legends Field, and Steinbrenner does a lot of charity work with him. The two of them chatted excitedly about the World Cup and the possibility of setting up a professional soccer team for Tampa, using Legends Field as its home stadium, an idea that Steinbrenner has been considering for a while, although he has some doubts about its commercial appeal. "Americans want knockdowns, hits, knockouts," he said. "That's why soccer never took off. It's too subtle for us."

By the time we left the restaurant, it was midafternoon. Steinbrenner wanted to show me the Yankees' minor-league complex, which is a couple of blocks from Legends Field. On the highway, an attractive young woman passed us in a Mercedes convertible, with the top down. Steinbrenner, who has been married for forty-six years and has four grown children, gawked at her through his shades. "One thing we have down here is a lot of blondes driving around in convertibles," he said.

Every spring, hundreds of young men descend on Tampa, hoping to be selected for one of the Yankees' six farm teams. Steinbrenner's attitude toward young talent has changed sharply over the years. In the past, he often used to trade it away for big names who turned out to be either overrated or past their prime. As a result of his impetuousness, the Yankees gave up perennial All-Stars like Fred McGriff and Willie McGee in return for busts like Steve Trout and Ed Whitson. No longer. Derek Jeter, Bernie Williams, Andy Pettitte, Mariano Rivera, and Jorge Posada are all products of the Yankees' farm system, a fact that Steinbrenner frequently repeats when people accuse him of buying success. "Nobody picks up on that," he told me. "They make it sound like 'Here comes moneybags.' "

As we walked through the minor-league clubhouse, Steinbrenner stopped in a conference room with a whiteboard at the front, on which somebody had written a checklist of ways to prepare for a game. He read the points out loud: " 'A. Physical: stay flexible, fit. B. Mental: know yourself; game plan; confidence.' Most organizations don't spend five seconds on this stuff," he said. "We work on it year-round. They have to understand that playing for the New York Yankees is different. That's the pinstripe mystique."

Just in case the players fail to get the message from their trainers, there are signs throughout the clubhouse featuring some of Steinbrenner's favorite aphorisms, such as "Winners never quit. Quitters never win"; "Second place is really the first loser"; and "If you're not the lead dog, the view never changes." These bits of wisdom are supplemented by uplifting quotations attributed to famous writers that Steinbrenner selected. Emerson: "Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." Wesley: "Cleanliness is next to godliness." (Steinbrenner hates dirt. In one of the few interviews that his wife, Joan, has ever given, she revealed that he liked her to vacuum their home several times a day.)

Steinbrenner's literary interests date back to Williams College in the late nineteen-forties, where he wrote his senior thesis on Thomas Hardy's romantic heroines. The sportswriter Steve Wulf, now with *ESPN Magazine*, once tried to catch Steinbrenner out by asking what he thought of Eustacia Vye, the beautiful seductress in "The Return of the Native." Steinbrenner responded that he thought Eustacia was one of Hardy's most successful female creations, supporting his case with details from the book. Today, he reads a lot of military history. He recently finished "Five Days in London: May 1940," John Lukacs's account of the British government's decision to fight on against the Nazis. "It gives a side of Hitler that you don't see," he told me. "He was an evil, bad man, but I think Churchill realized he was brilliant in some ways. If it hadn't been for Churchill, I hate to think what would have happened to this world."

Not surprisingly, Steinbrenner is a great admirer of Churchillian rhetoric. He likes to deliver rallying speeches to his players, especially when they are doing badly. (Back in the nineteen-seventies, Sparky Lyle and Ed Figueroa were reportedly fined a hundred dollars each for sleeping through one of these perorations.) He also likes to encourage the young players. " 'To thine own self be true'—that's what I tell them," he confided. "It comes from 'Hamlet.' " The few tyros who were hanging around the clubhouse didn't look as if they would be receptive to Shakespeare. One, a baby-faced boy destined for the Staten Island Yankees, was so overcome by running into Steinbrenner that he could hardly speak. Another, who was getting his hands treated by a trainer, managed a couple of words.

"Blisters?" Steinbrenner asked.

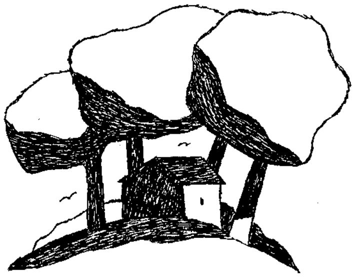
"Calluses."

"A lot of hitting?"

"Yeah."

"Well, keep at it."

In 1952, Steinbrenner joined the Air Force, and he coached basketball and baseball at Lockbourne Air Force Base, in Columbus, Ohio. After leaving the military, he studied for a master's degree in physical education at Ohio State, and coached basketball and football at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Columbus. Then he coached football at Northwestern and Purdue. The year he was at Northwestern, the team lost every game, but his experience in the locker room stayed with him. "These days, there are not many sports owners who have ever worn the jockstrap," he said, with a dismissive shake of his head. "If you've never worn the jock, you don't know. What hurts? What works? And if you don't know, that's a problem."

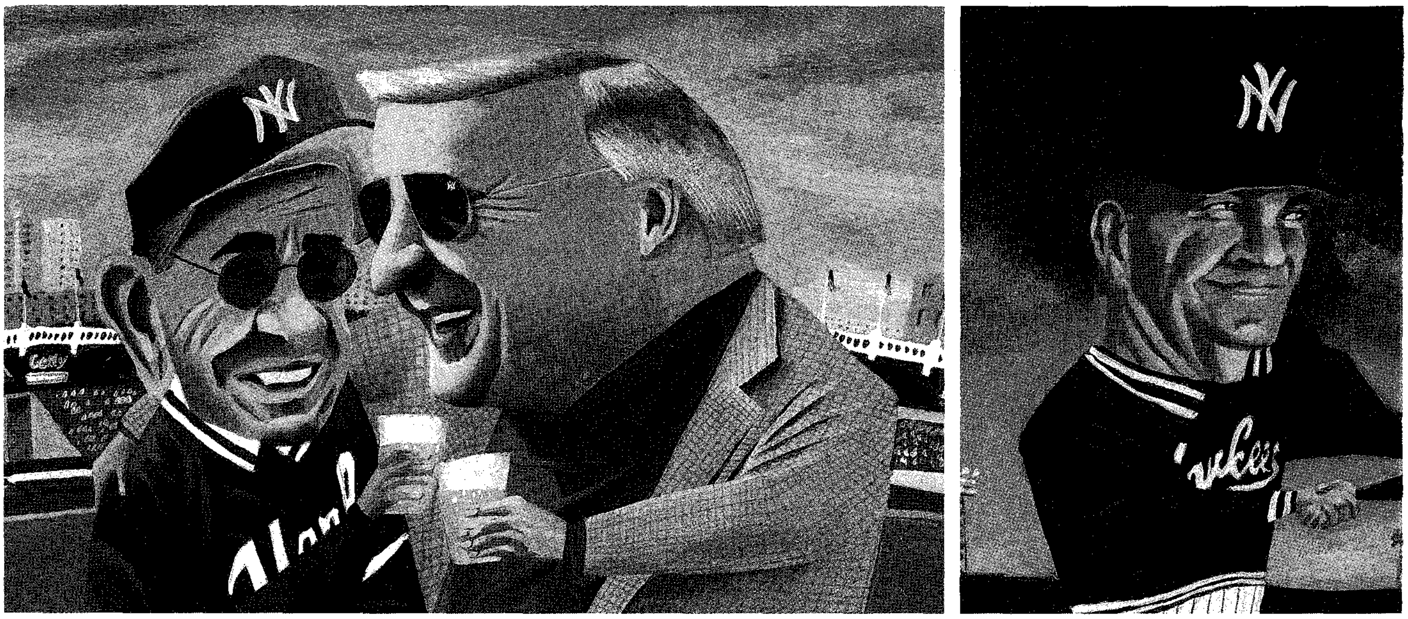


Outside on the practice field, dozens of young men were doing fielding exercises, led by a tall, much older man. "That's Frankie Hondo Howard," Steinbrenner said. "He was a basketball All-American at Ohio State when I was at Aquinas. He still holds the rebounding record. He played for the Washington Senators. We brought him in this year. Look at him—he never stops working." Another Ohio State star, Howard (Hopalong) Cassady (who won the Heisman Trophy in 1955), also works as a minor-league coach for the Yankees. Howard and Cassady are in their late sixties, but, like Cliff Lewis, the former Cleveland Brown, they have been admitted to George's world, a place where age is no barrier to productive service. "Those kinda guys never retire," Steinbrenner said, with a certain awe. "I'll take them any day. They're my type of guys."

In 1957, a year after he married Joan Zieg, a student at Ohio State, Steinbrenner returned to Cleveland and became the treasurer of his family's company, Kinsman Marine Transit, which transported coal, grain, and other commodities on the Great Lakes. Over the next twenty years, Steinbrenner tripled Kinsman's revenues, partly through merging with a bigger local rival, American Ship Building, and adopting its name. (During the early nineteen-nineties, foreign competition forced American Ship Building into bankruptcy.)

He entered the shipping industry at the behest of his father, Henry Steinbrenner, a stern and imperious man, who in 1927 had become M.I.T.'s first N.C.A.A. outdoor track-and-field champion, winning the two-hundred-and-twenty-yard low hurdles. Henry Steinbrenner had a poor opinion of his son, who for years struggled to impress him. During a high-school track meet, Steinbrenner won two hurdles races, only to be berated for losing a third. His grades weren't good enough for M.I.T., and he never matched his father's success as a hurdler. When he took over the Yankees, in January, 1973, his father told a

Cleveland newspaper that it was "the first smart thing he's ever done."



Steinbrenner finally made peace with Yogi Berra, whom he fired in 1985; Brian Cashman plays the role of buffer between the Boss and

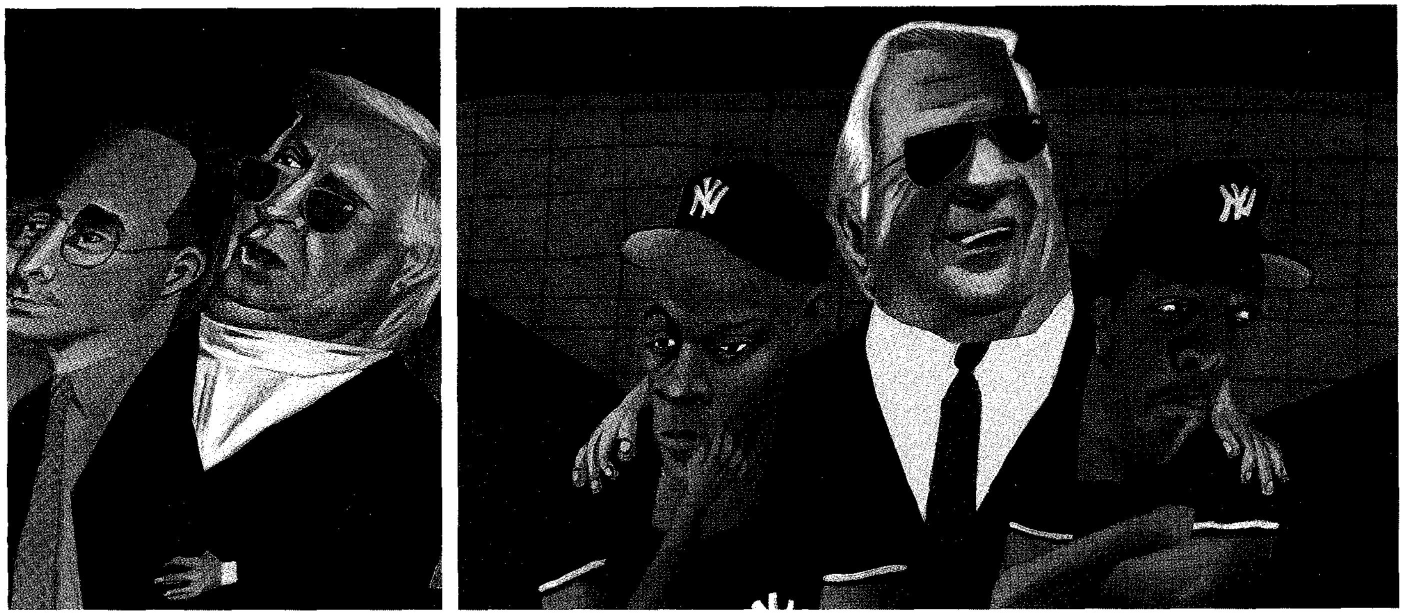
Steinbrenner bought the Yankees from CBS, which had paid more than thirteen million dollars for the team back in 1964, hoping to attract viewers. But the Yankees entered a long slump, the ratings were disappointing, and William S. Paley, the chairman of CBS, eventually put the team up for sale. Steinbrenner, who had already tried and failed to buy the Cleveland Indians, was determined to make a bid. As a child, he had often gone to the Cleveland Hotel to watch Joe DiMaggio and other Yankee legends arrive in town. He got together ten million dollars, of which rather less than two hundred thousand was his own. Six million was borrowed from the bank. A motley assortment of limited partners—including Nelson Bunker Hunt, the oil magnate; Tom Evans, a partner in Richard Nixon's law firm; and John DeLorean, the auto-industry executive—put up the rest of the money. Some of these men subsequently found themselves accused of various forms of financial chicanery, but Steinbrenner didn't care. He just wanted their money to buy the Yankees. "Nothing else in the world mattered to me but to have them," he recalled.

The day he met Paley is still vivid in Steinbrenner's mind. "He had his face turned away from me, and he said, 'I understand you're here to buy the Yankees, or to make a proposal.' I was scared shitless. I said, 'Yes, sir, I am.' He said, 'I like that "sir."' I said, 'Well, that's the way I've been brought up.' He said, 'I know where you've been to school, and I know all about you.' He had a full bio. He said, 'Tell me, do you want to give me Chinese paper for this team?' I said, 'Sir, I don't know what Chinese paper is.' He says, 'It's just plain paper that you can't take to the bank.' I said, 'No, sir, I'm here with cash. I got as many of my friends as I could to put up the money to come in.' He turned around—it was the first time I saw him face to face. He says, 'You got a deal.' I almost died. I could've fainted right there."

At the age of forty-two, Steinbrenner had the provincial's awestruck attitude toward New York, which he retains to this day. "Coming to New York was like a different world," he told me. "It was, like, 'Whoa! Look at the tall buildings.' But, once you become a part of it, it is really something—something that you are really proud of." When Steinbrenner was introduced to the New York media, most of the local journalists had never heard of him. He called the Yankees "the best buy in sports today" and added, "I think it's a bargain." His other statements proved less prescient. "I won't be active in the day-to-day operations of the club at all," he said, vowing to remain in Cleveland and continue in the shipping business. He kept his promise not to move to New York, but that was all. Within a year, he had fired the club president, Mike Burke; the manager, Ralph Houk, and the general manager, Lee MacPhail, had both resigned.

Steinbrenner's lack of experience turned out to be an advantage in some respects. In the early nineteen-seventies, baseball was run by a coterie of like-minded skinflints, the most influential of whom was Walter O'Malley, the owner of the Los Angeles (née Brooklyn) Dodgers. The owners kept the players in a form of indentured servitude, and most of the money that the game generated stayed in their pockets. This situation started to change when the players' union, led by Marvin Miller, a former negotiator for the United Steel Workers, mounted a successful challenge to the "reserve clause" in players' contracts, which had kept them tied to the same club for their entire careers unless the owner agreed to a trade. Many owners never reconciled themselves to the resultant era of rising salaries and "free agency," but Steinbrenner, who wasn't wedded to the old system, moved quickly to sign up players like Jim (Catfish) Hunter, Andy Messersmith, and Reggie Jackson. "He was the first baseball owner to understand how free agency would change the game, and the first to utilize free agency to build winning teams," Miller wrote in his 1991 memoir, "A Whole Different Ball Game."

Steinbrenner's political moves were less adroit. On April 5, 1974, the first day of the baseball season, a grand jury in Cleveland indicted him on fourteen counts, including making illegal political contributions to Richard Nixon's Committee to Re-Elect the President and obstructing justice. Steinbrenner has always been an Independent, and his main motivation in supporting CREEP was commercial: he hoped to curry favor with the policymakers who controlled government shipbuilding contracts. (He also raised a lot of money for congressional Democrats.) On August 23, 1974, two weeks after Nixon resigned, Steinbrenner pleaded guilty to one felony count and was fined fifteen thousand dollars. Three months later, Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of baseball, banned him for two years on the ground that ignoring his illegal actions would "undermine the public's confidence in our game."



oe Torre; "I won't turn my back on Doc, and I won't turn my back on Darryl," Steinbrenner said of Dwight Gooden and Strawberry.

Steinbrenner's critics seized on the conviction. Red Smith, who was then at the *Times*, regularly referred to him as "convicted felon George Steinbrenner." More than twenty-five years later, Steinbrenner hasn't forgotten how it felt. "Maybe people say, 'Oh, it means nothing. It was a petty felony.' Not me," he said. "I missed the right to vote until President Reagan, bless his soul, gave me a pardon. It was very tough for me. I am very patriotic. I believe in this country."

Kuhn eventually reduced Steinbrenner's ban to fifteen months. In 1976, the year that Steinbrenner returned to baseball, the Yankees won the American League pennant, but the Cincinnati Reds swept them in the World Series. The morning after the Series ended, Steinbrenner and his senior executives were meeting in his office when a reporter looked in and asked what was going on. "We just got our asses kicked, and it's not going to happen again," Steinbrenner replied. The following year, the Yankees again reached the World Series, where they faced the Los Angeles Dodgers. In the decisive sixth game, at Yankee Stadium, Reggie Jackson hit three home runs off three different pitchers on just three pitches. Steinbrenner still regards that night as his proudest moment in baseball—the moment he finally impressed his father.

The owner's box at Legends Field is directly behind the home dugout. When I arrived there on a sunny afternoon this spring to watch the Yankees play the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, the first inning was already under way. Steinbrenner was sitting with Phil McNiff, a former F.B.I. agent, who is in charge of running Legends Field, and Monsignor Higgins. "This is Tammany Hall," the Monsignor joked. "This is where things get done."

Steinbrenner was in a good mood, at least to begin with. He was preparing for the launch of the YES Network, which was only ten days away. The preparations had been marred by a highly publicized disagreement with Cablevision, the cable company that serves three million potential Yankees fans in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Westchester, New Jersey, and Long Island, but Steinbrenner was still pretty confident that the two sides would reach an agreement. "I hope like hell we can get them together," he told me.

The Yankees and Cablevision have been doing business together for years. In 1988, Cablevision agreed to pay the Yankees four hundred and eighty-six million dollars over twelve years in return for the right to broadcast most of the club's games on its sports network, MSG. The contract, which was by far the most valuable in baseball history, ran out at the end of 2001. Before it expired, Chuck Dolan, the chairman of Cablevision and an old Cleveland friend of Steinbrenner's, tried to buy the Yankees outright in order to guarantee that their games remained on MSG. The two sides failed to reach an agreement, partly because Steinbrenner had television ambitions of his own. The success of MSG, as well as of ESPN and Fox Sports Net, had shown that sports networks could prove extremely lucrative. In June of last year, the Yankees paid Cablevision thirty million dollars to satisfy any remaining legal obligations and went ahead with plans for their own network.

By that time, Steinbrenner had already merged the Yankees with the New Jersey Nets and the New Jersey Devils, in the YankeeNets holding company. The combination of the three teams, which was initiated by the financiers Raymond Chambers and Lewis Katz, who were part owners of the Nets, was completed in August, 2000. Steinbrenner remained in operational control of the Yankees, and the merger raised about two hundred and twenty million dollars for him and his limited partners. It also provided the prospect of winter programming for the new network once the Nets' and the Devils' current television contracts expire. Last September, YankeeNets hired Leo Hindery, a veteran cable executive, to run YES, and took a sixty-per-cent stake in the network; Goldman, Sachs put up more than three hundred million dollars to become a minority partner.

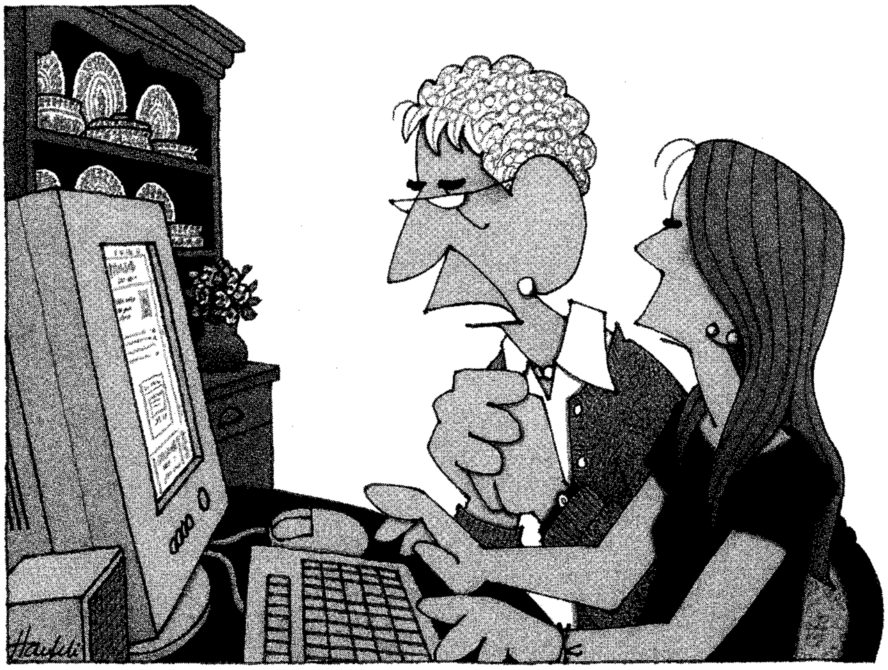
The formation of the YES Network had gone smoothly, but now Cablevision was refusing to make the channel available on the terms that the Yankees were demanding, and negotiations had broken down. Steinbrenner was monitoring the situation, but he had stayed out of the negotiations. "I have nothing to do with it, because I know nothing about the television business," he said.

For the moment, he was more concerned with spring training. Two of his new signings, Jason Giambi and David Wells, were in that day's lineup, but at the start of the sixth inning the Devil Rays, an expansion team with no recognized stars, were leading by 2–0, and the Yankees were facing their fourth defeat in a row. "Can't you get me some hits, or at least a prayer?" Steinbrenner said to the Monsignor. "You know what I always say, George," the Monsignor replied. "Prayer is good, but only when you work hard." In years past, Steinbrenner would get furious if the Yankees played badly in spring training. These days, he tries hard not to care, but he doesn't always manage it. During the seventh inning, he went inside and started making phone calls. At the start of the ninth, with the Yankees yet to score a run, he left. "I've got a conference call, and I don't want to miss it," he said.

Between 1980 and 1994, the Yankees made it to the World Series only once (losing to Los Angeles in 1981), and Steinbrenner switched managers fifteen times. He fired Dick Howser after a season in which the Yankees won more than a hundred games, telling reporters that Howser wanted to enter the real-estate business. (This came as news to Howser.) He promised Bob Lemon that he would manage for the entire season, "no matter what," and then fired him before the end of April. He fired Yogi Berra by telephone—and had somebody else make the call. Most notorious of all, Steinbrenner fired Billy Martin five times, the last time in 1988, after Martin got into a brawl in a topless bar in Texas. The dysfunctional relationship between Steinbrenner and Martin came to symbolize all that was wrong at Yankee Stadium. "It was pathetic," Bill Madden, of the *News*, who has covered the Yankees for nearly thirty years, told me. "Billy kept coming back, and, especially the last couple of times, he was burned out as a manager. George should have seen that. I mean, Billy had just been whipped and beaten down so long that he couldn't function anymore as a manager." Martin died in a car accident on Christmas Day, 1989. There were rumors at the time that Steinbrenner had been about to hire him yet again, although Steinbrenner denied it. "Billy Martin was a brilliant baseball man and a good pal," he told me. "He just wanted the booze too much. I used to have conversations with him. I said, 'Billy, you've gotta stop it. You've gotta stop the drinking.' And then something would happen, and I'd have to fire him, or give him another job."

Steinbrenner quarrelled with his players almost as often as he did with his managers. Instead of confronting them privately, he attacked their performances in front of reporters. Although he would never admit it, he seemed to resent the publicity that some of his expensive imports received, especially Reggie Jackson and the slugger Dave Winfield. He also complained about players' salaries, conveniently ignoring his own role in promoting the inflation. The Yankees' winning percentage during the nineteen-eighties was better than most people realize, but they kept missing the playoffs. To make matters worse, the scrappy Mets won the 1986 World Series and captured the hearts of many New Yorkers. Steinbrenner could do little to arrest the Yankees' decline. His incessant trading had stripped the farm system of its top prospects, and stars like Winfield and Don Mattingly didn't have enough support.

The one thing he could do was switch managers. At the start of the 1989 season, Steinbrenner appointed as skipper Dallas Green, a six-foot-five bear of a man who, in 1980, had led the Philadelphia Phillies to their only World Series victory. Steinbrenner granted Green the right to bring in his own coaches, an unprecedented concession. It soon became clear, though, that he didn't have the patience for the changes that Green wanted to make. "We got to sniping at each other," Green recalled. "He started sniping at my coaching staff through the media, and I returned the salvos doubly hard from my end of the media." In the



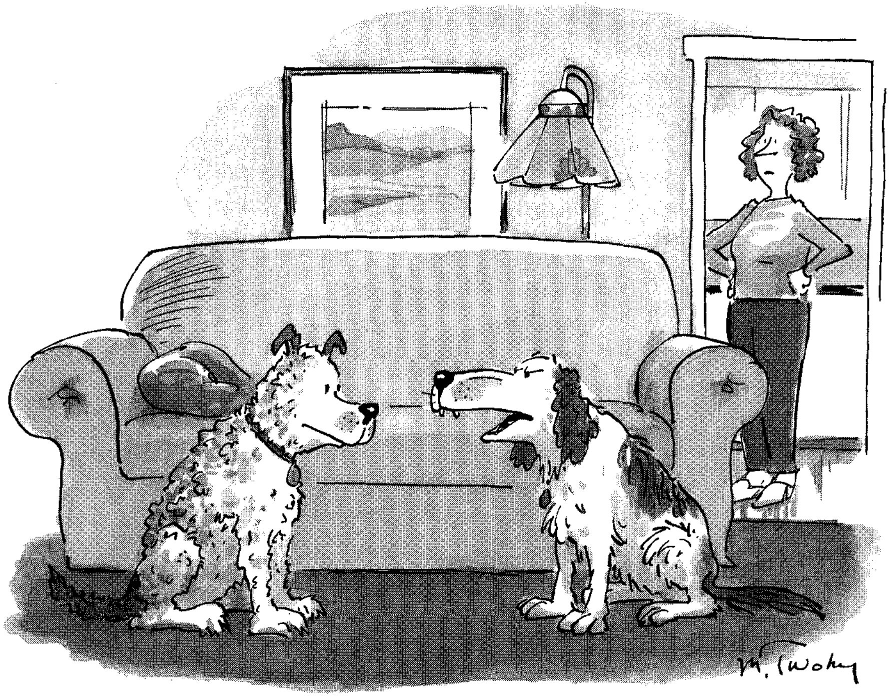
"What's to prevent some total stranger anywhere in the world from paying my bills?"

middle of August, with the Yankees eight games out of first place, Steinbrenner fired Green and hired Bucky Dent. "We fell apart," Green said. "But I always did, and I still do, respect his—well, it's just an athlete's desire to win. He exudes that."

For four years in a row, from 1989 through 1992, the Yankees fell below .500, and many fans gave up hope. Looking back on this unhappy era, Steinbrenner is philosophical. "It's very difficult to stay at the top all the time," he said. "You gotta build. If it gets torn apart, with age or retirement, you gotta rebuild." At the same time, he freely admits that he made a lot of errors—beginning with allowing Reggie Jackson to sign with the California Angels after his contract with the Yankees expired. For many Yankees fans, the low point came in 1985, when Steinbrenner fired Yogi Berra. "That was a mistake, to relieve Yogi when I did and to have Clyde King, who was my general manager at the time, call him and not do it myself," Steinbrenner conceded. "It was poor judgment. Clyde called him in the middle of a lake or something, and that wasn't right to do. I don't pretend to be perfect, and I'm not. You could sit and write a huge volume about the mistakes I've made."

Steinbrenner's worst decision was agreeing to pay a shifty gambler named Howie Spira forty thousand dollars for what was purported to be damaging information about Dave Winfield. Winfield's agent had infuriated Steinbrenner by obtaining a contract with a big cost-of-living adjustment, which Steinbrenner hadn't fully understood. "George just got had," Fay Vincent, then the commissioner of baseball, recalled. "So he got very angry at Winfield, and he went after him in a vicious way." Eventually, Steinbrenner paid Spira, who then tried to extort him for more. After the *News* broke the story, Vincent launched an investigation, which ended with Steinbrenner's reluctantly agreeing to have his name placed on a list of people ineligible to own a baseball club.

Steinbrenner rarely talks about his two bans. His spokesman, Howard Rubenstein, asked me not to bring them up, but I did anyway, and he was surprisingly contrite. "A lot of what happened to me, I admit I deserved," he said, adding that he doesn't blame either Kuhn or Vincent. "Both men did what they felt they had to do. So I hold nothing against them—in fact, I like Fay Vincent. He's a Williams man. That was the irony—a man from Williams putting me out of the game."



"I actually know more commands than I respond to."

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In retrospect, Fay Vincent did Steinbrenner a big favor. His absence in 1991 and 1992 allowed Gene (Stick) Michael, who was then the general manager of the Yankees, to remake the club without constant interference. "I get along well with George," Michael once remarked. "I say, 'Yes, sir,' at all the meetings, and then I go out and do what I think is best for the team." Michael assembled a core of veteran players, including Paul O'Neill, Jim Abbott, and Wade Boggs, filling out the roster with home-produced young talent, such as Bernie Williams. He hired as manager Buck Showalter, a workaholic who sometimes spent the night in his office.

In March, 1993, when Vincent allowed Steinbrenner to return to the Stadium, the Yankees had a new look to them. Steinbrenner, too, had benefitted from his enforced rest. "I had time to sit out and think where I'd made mistakes and what I would do differently," he told me. After twenty years of rash behavior, Steinbrenner finally began to take some notice of what Michael and others told him. "That was a problem for him before," Dallas Green said. "He stopped creativity because he wanted to make all the decisions." When Michael and his colleagues reportedly resisted the idea of trading Bernie Williams to the Montreal Expos for Larry Walker, Steinbrenner deferred to them, a decision that preserved a homegrown All-Star who could appeal to New York's growing Latino population. The decision to keep Williams established a precedent that is still paying off. A couple of seasons ago, Steinbrenner suggested trading a prospect named Alfonso Soriano to Anaheim for Jim Edmonds, but he didn't get his way, and Soriano is now a star player.

Yankees past and present notice a big difference in how the club is run these days. "They have a meeting now, and they go over things," Yogi Berra told me. "Two heads are better than one. Four or five heads are even better." Although Steinbrenner has the last word, he listens to contrary views. "He doesn't want people to tell him what he wants to hear," Buck Showalter said when I spoke with him recently. "Believe me, if you are in a meeting and he thinks that is what is going on he will devour you."

In 1995, the Yankees made the playoffs for the first time since 1981, and the Seattle Mariners defeated them by three games to two. At the end of the season, Showalter's contract was up. Steinbrenner offered him a new one, and a pay raise, but insisted on making some changes to the coaching staff, which Showalter refused to go along with. "I didn't feel like I could go back in the locker room with coaches that had been picked for me and fire guys that I knew were capable of doing the job, and then look the players in the eyes and talk to them about loyalty," he said.

It was Arthur Richman, a former newspaperman who served as a senior adviser to Steinbrenner, who first suggested replacing Showalter with Joe Torre, a manager who had already been fired three times—by the St. Louis Cardinals, the Braves, and the Mets. Steinbrenner's initial reaction was "Torre? He never won anywhere." Eventually, however, he agreed to speak with Torre, whom he now praises lavishly. "My relationship with Joe is the best I've had," Steinbrenner said during one of our talks. "Wonderful guy. I understand his points, his philosophies, and I give him credit for understanding me. I think he's a lot like Joe McCarthy"—the legendary Yankee skipper whose team won the World Series seven times between 1931 and 1946. A few days after we had this conversation, Steinbrenner sent me a newspaper article, on which he had highlighted some passages: "McCarthy knew all there is to know about the mechanics of baseball. . . . But he had another and more important gift: an understanding of human nature, a high talent for dealing with miscellaneous personalities and temperaments."

I spoke with Torre recently and asked him about his relationship with Steinbrenner. "One thing I learned a long time ago—if you are going to take somebody's money, you gotta take their abuse, too," he replied. "You can't pick and choose the stuff you like about people." Torre doesn't take everything Steinbrenner says personally. "Sometimes it bothers you more than other times," he said. "But you understand that, first off, he's the boss and he has the right to do whatever he wants to do." Torre paused. "I think our relationship has been on a very high level," he went on. "Not only do I respect him but he respects me, and I think that is why it has lasted so long and been as consistent as it's been."

Both Steinbrenner and Torre expect the Yankees to reach the World Series every season. These expectations place great demands on the team. Torre, who grew up on Avenue T in the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn, is able to handle the pressure, and his biggest achievement has been in helping his players to handle it, too. "One thing I try to do is keep distraction out of the clubhouse," he said. "It's tough enough to play baseball. On top of that, it makes it even tougher to play in New York."

Before the start of this season, a potential distraction arose when Ruben Rivera, an outfielder who was trying to make the Yankees' roster, admitted stealing Derek Jeter's glove and passing it to a memorabilia dealer. Twenty years ago, Steinbrenner would have got involved, and the tabloids would have feasted on the story for weeks. But Torre consulted with Brian Cashman, who has been the Yankees' general manager since 1998, and they decided that Rivera would have to go. Torre informed some of the senior players, including Mariano Rivera, who is Ruben Rivera's cousin, of the decision, and Cashman obtained Steinbrenner's approval for the payment that Rivera received in return for leaving immediately. The story lasted for just two days, after which the back pages returned to Andy Pettitte's sore elbow and Roger Clemens's bruised ankle. Steinbrenner stayed in the background. "He doesn't interfere with what I do," Torre said. "We talk about things at times, about certain players and stuff, but he's never mandated what I do here—who to play and who not to play. He'll say, 'This player, I think he's good,' or whatever. But he's never said, 'You play this guy.'"

When tension arises between the owner and the manager, it is usually prompted by the glowing media coverage that Torre receives. Steinbrenner occasionally reminds Torre about his previous managerial stints, saying, "Joe, what the hell happened in Atlanta, St. Louis, and the Mets that they didn't see the greatness in you that I have seen? Could it be the organization?" When Torre's contract came up for renewal last year, Steinbrenner refused to discuss it with him until the season was over, claiming that he was too busy with the launch of the YES Network and other business. Torre ended up dealing with Randy Levine, the Yankees' president, who is a former deputy mayor in the Giuliani administration. When the contract, which guaranteed Torre more than five million dollars a year, was finally signed, last November, the Yankees didn't issue a press release, an omission that some interpreted as Steinbrenner's putting Torre in his place.

With two such strong-willed men running the Yankees, the thirty-five-year-old Cashman fulfills the essential roles of intermediary and buffer. "I talk to a lot of people in all areas of the club, including the owner, and I try to reach a consensus," he told me. Whereas Steinbrenner and Torre both look as if they had stepped out of a Raymond Chandler novel, Cashman has the appearance and demeanor of a bright young internist at Columbia Presbyterian. He has worked for the Yankees since he graduated from college, and he was just thirty-one when Steinbrenner made him the second-youngest general manager in baseball history. "I owe the Boss a lot," he said. "Everything I am today is attributable to my father and mother and to him."

I spoke with Cashman one afternoon during spring training when he was getting ready to meet with Steinbrenner. He knew that the principal topic of conversation would be the Yankees' record of four victories and eleven losses. He opened a laptop computer and read from a column of figures detailing the team's spring-training record for the past six years, which he had put together for Steinbrenner. "Since 1996, the best spring-training record we had was in 1997, 20–11, and that's the only year we didn't go to the World Series," Cashman said. "What it all means I can't really tell you. I'm just not overly concerned about it. But you try telling him that."

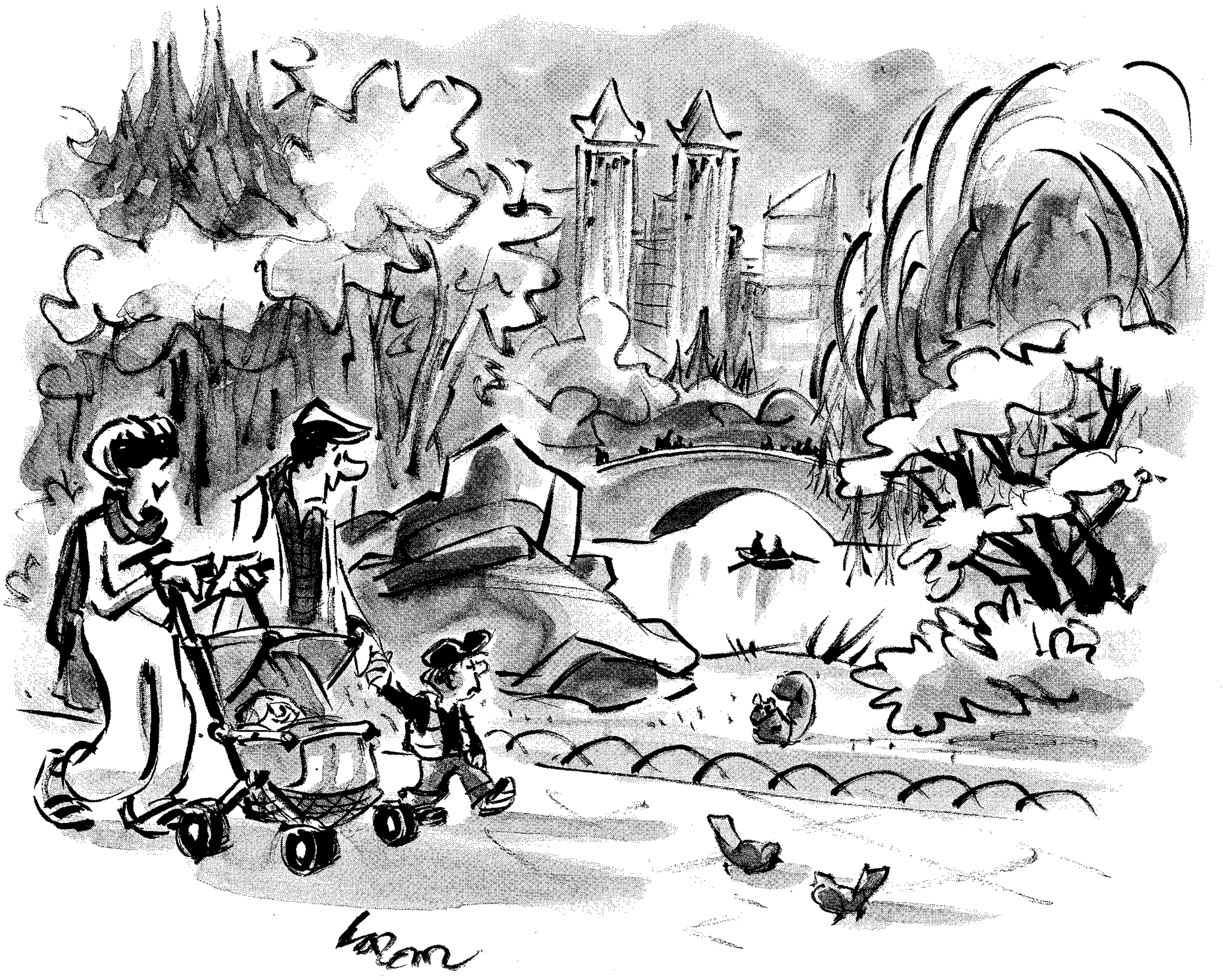
Although Steinbrenner has mellowed somewhat over the years, he is still remarkably driven. "You are never satisfied," he told me at one point. "Assume nothing. I have that on my desk, and I have it all over my locker room." Steinbrenner also retains an almost pathological distaste for defeat. On an intellectual level, he knows that baseball teams play a long season and can't hope to win every game, or even nearly every game. But whenever the Yankees hit a losing streak he feels cheated and angry, and he tends to lash out. (A few years ago, he publicly labelled one of his pitchers, Hideki Irabu, a "fat, pussy toad.") "I call him Jekyll and Hyde," Dallas Green said of Steinbrenner. "Because if he comes into a room full of people he charms everybody. He's a great conversationalist, he's a friendly guy, he's a very charitable guy. But when he got to the ballpark he seemed to turn into the other guy."

Steinbrenner's approach is reminiscent of that of the famous British soccer coach Bill Shankly, who once remarked, only partly in jest, "Football is not a matter of life and death. It's much more important than that." People like Shankly and Steinbrenner may not be easy to deal with, but to stay on top in any major sport it is essential to maintain the true fanatic's warped sense of reality. Insecurity and paranoia are also big advantages. "We've had a fantastic five years, but I also learned this," Steinbrenner said. "When you least expect it, you look over your shoulder and they are gaining on you. They're all gaining on me right now."

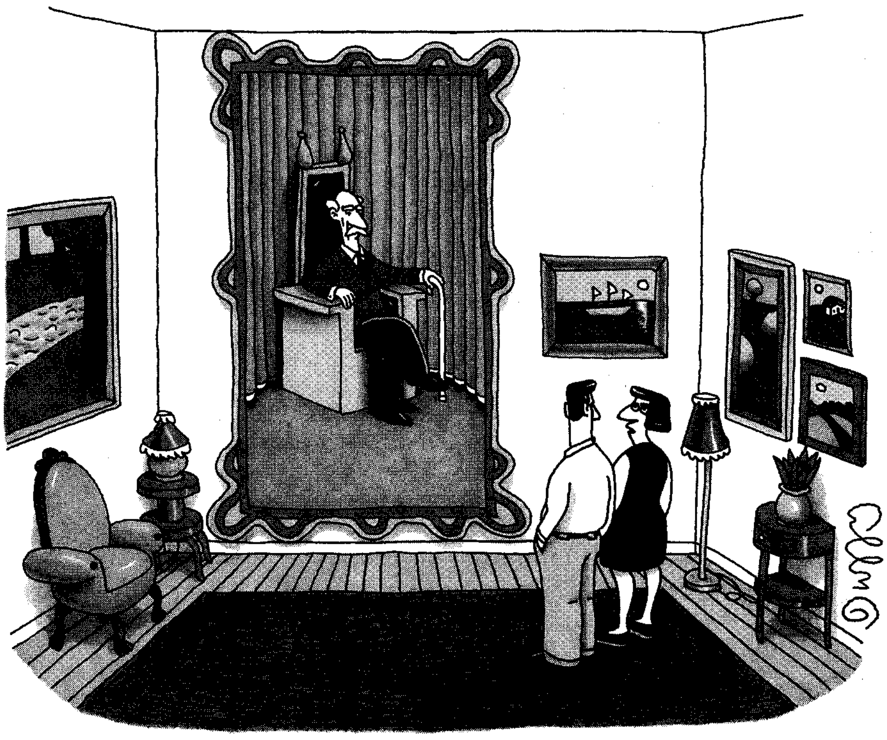
This claim is dubious. At the end of June, the Yankees moved into first place in the American League East. Even Mike Lupica, of the *News*, who came up with the "Boss Steinbrenner" moniker and has been lashing Steinbrenner for twenty-five years, recently described the current lineup in the Bronx as "the greatest Yankee team in history." Far from endorsing such comments, Steinbrenner regards them as seditious. "How good is this team going to be?" he told me during the spring. "I can honestly say we'll have to wait and see. It's up to the organization."

Organization, discipline, and teamwork are Steinbrenner's mantras. At most ball clubs, players wear jerseys with their names on the back; the Yankees wear only their numbers. These days, Steinbrenner said, "conditions are different in baseball. But the conditions of the Yankees will never change, we hope. We believe in wearing your uniform neat. They wear coats and ties when they get on airplanes. I don't want them looking like a bunch of softball players that just got off the bus. Joe [Torre] buys that, just like I do." When Jason Giambi arrived from Oakland at the start of the year, there was a lot of speculation about whether he would trim his biker-dude locks and shave his goatee. He did both, winning Steinbrenner's instant approval. Steve Karsay, a relief pitcher whom the Yankees picked up from the Atlanta Braves, didn't make as good an impression. "Gee, you're such a good-looking kid," Steinbrenner told him. "I bet you'd look even better with shorter hair."

Steinbrenner divides the world into two types of people: those who work



"When they built this, Jeremy, parks didn't have themes."



"I thought he was *your* *grandfather."*

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for him and those who don't. For years, he complained that he couldn't get through to his executives by phone quickly enough. Eventually, he ordered many of them to have hot lines installed. "If I was away from the red phone, I could never relax," Marty Appel, a former Yankees public-relations director, recalled in his book, "Now Pitching for the Yankees." "I thought he was looking for me." Appel's successors didn't have it any easier. "He gets upset about something, anything, and he says, 'Look, if this happens again, you're gone,' " Rob Butcher, who is now the media-relations director of the Cincinnati Reds, told me. "I'm sure he says that once a day to somebody. His way of managing people is through intimidation." Steinbrenner fired Butcher on December 21, 1995, after he had had the temerity to go home to Wilmington, Ohio, for his first vacation in a year, just as the team was signing David Cone. Butcher offered to fly back to New York if the deal went through over Christmas, but that wasn't good enough for Steinbrenner. "Don't bother," he told Butcher. "We don't really need you."

The Yankees are the only team in baseball that doesn't close down for a week at Christmas. When Brian Cashman was renegotiating his contract last fall, he insisted on a clause guaranteeing him time off over the holidays. Steinbrenner honored the clause in his fashion. On Christmas Eve, he took David Wells to lunch and offered him a two-year contract. Cashman is supposedly responsible for trades, but he didn't know anything about the Wells deal until Steinbrenner interrupted his vacation to tell him about it. "He is always in charge, and you have to respect that," Cashman said. "He will give you some autonomy at some moments, but you also have to be prepared to be stripped of that at any time." For his part, Steinbrenner defines his role as overseeing the work of others. "I've got a favorite saying that I tell them they should remember," he told me. " 'The speed of the pack is determined by the pace of the leader.' "

Steinbrenner's rule, like those of many despots, is marked by surprising acts of kindness. In recent years, he has made a concerted effort to win over his former enemies. Yogi Berra didn't speak to Steinbrenner for fourteen years. Then, in 1999, Steinbrenner went to see him, apologized, and made a contribution to his baseball museum. Berra is once again a regular visitor to the Stadium, where he often sits in the owner's box. ("You get a good view to watch the game," he said.) This year, he and Reggie Jackson both attended spring training as guest instructors. Steinbrenner has even settled his differences with Dave Winfield, devoting a special day to him at Yankee Stadium in 2001, after Winfield was elected to the Hall of Fame. "I've tried, in the past ten years, to go back, and when I've done wrong, tried to make it right," Steinbrenner said. "I haven't succeeded everywhere, but I've tried."

Steinbrenner also realizes the commercial value of preserving his club's history. The Yankees are a brand, and having the old-timers on hand helps to preserve that brand. But it isn't just a matter of money. If Steinbrenner's motivation was purely pecuniary, he would hardly have persevered with Dwight (Doc) Gooden and Darryl Strawberry, two recidivists who tarnish the Yankees' wholesome image. Earlier this year, Gooden was placed on fully paid leave after being arrested for drunk driving. He recently pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of reckless driving, and he is now back with the Yankees as a minor-league instructor and "special adviser" to Steinbrenner. Strawberry returned to prison this spring after being thrown out of a Florida drug-treatment program. He has been promised a job with the Yankees if he finishes his sentence and stays clean. "I won't turn my back on Doc, and I won't turn my back on Darryl, and I'll tell you why," Steinbrenner declared. "These fellas—it's a sickness. Drugs are a fucking sickness. And if we don't go at the root of the thing and cure that, how can you blame the user? How can you blame the kids who get put upon and don't have the will to resist?"

Despite Steinbrenner's domineering ways, it remains an open question how much of the Yankees' success during the past few years is due to his actions. Bill Madden praises Steinbrenner for resurrecting the Yankees; Mike Lupica, his colleague at the *News*, says the owner's contribution was limited to an open checkbook and the fortuitous hiring of Torre. "It wasn't even his idea," Lupica told me recently. "He just ended up with the guy who is going to go down in history as the greatest ever manager of the New York Yankees. That changed everything for George."

Nobody would dispute the fact that Torre has done an excellent job, but ultimately it is Steinbrenner who is responsible for assembling and retaining the most talented collection of players, coaches, and baseball executives in the country. "George finds winners, and he's a winner," Roger Clemens told me. "The guys that he hires under him, they are winners—Mr. Torre, Mel Stottlemyre, Don Zimmer, the whole staff." Clemens, who has won the Cy Young Award six times, was thirty-six when he joined the Yankees. He said that Steinbrenner is able to "look at people and see how much will and desire they have, no matter how young or old they are." Buck Showalter agrees with this assessment. "I think his baseball knowledge is underrated," he said. "He understands the type of guy who can prosper in New York and who can't."

Of course, money has also played a crucial role in the Yankees' revival. Last year, the club generated local revenues, from sources including gate receipts and television-rights payments, of $217.8 million; the Expos had local revenues of $9.8 million. In football and basketball, teams are forced to share the bulk of their revenues in order to insure that clubs in small cities remain competitive, but baseball teams kick in only twenty per cent of the local revenues that they bring in, and they can spend as much of the remainder as they choose on players. Rising economic inequality is the main reason that no team with small revenues has won a single World Series game since the Minnesota Twins, in 1991. Twenty-five years ago, the Cincinnati Reds were a major force in baseball. Today, they struggle to compete at the top level. All the same, to ascribe the Yankees' success solely to a bulging treasury may be, in the words of Rupert Murdoch, "to greatly underestimate George." In 1998, Murdoch's company, the News Corporation, bought the Los Angeles Dodgers. Since then, the Dodgers have spent heavily on players, but they are still struggling on the field, and so are the big-spending Orioles and Mets. "You can put together a lot of expensive players and get nowhere," Murdoch told me. "Somehow, George makes it work." (Murdoch's son James is on the board of YankeeNets.)

From the beginning, Steinbrenner saw baseball as part of the entertainment business. During the nineteen-sixties, he invested in Broadway shows that his friend Jimmy Nederlander produced. When Steinbrenner bought the Yankees, Nederlander, who was one of the limited partners, gave him some advice that he never forgot: "Remember, we are a star-vehicle town. New York loves stars, worships stars, so you've got to have some stars to draw the people." Steinbrenner flew to Chicago for Thanksgiving in 1976 to sign Reggie Jackson, making him one of baseball's first millionaires; this past winter, with a new cable-television network to promote, he agreed to pay a hundred and twenty million dollars over seven years to Jason Giambi. But being a star on Steinbrenner's Yankees also involves responsibilities. "Those you build into stars, you make sure they are team players," he told me. "When you start letting the inmates run the prison, you are lost. A lot of teams have done that."

Steinbrenner also established early on that any profits the Yankees generated would be spent on new players. "A lot of owners give lip service to wanting to win, but this guy worked at it," Dallas Green told me. "And he was willing to put his bucks where his mouth was." For almost three decades, Steinbrenner's limited partners received hardly any dividend payments from the Yankees, and they could not realize a profit unless they cashed in their shares. Many did sell—usually to Steinbrenner and his family, who gradually increased their stake in the Yankees to almost sixty per cent. In following this reinvestment policy, Steinbrenner was anticipating a major trend in American business: during the nineteen-eighties and nineties, most major corporations slashed their dividends in order to invest in future growth. The strategy has paid off. In 1972, fewer than a million people went to Yankee Stadium. Last year, the total attendance for the season was more than three million.

If the Red Sox franchise is worth seven hundred million dollars, which is what it sold for earlier this year, YankeeNets must be worth well over a billion. Steinbrenner's stake alone is probably worth several hundred million dollars—not a bad return on an initial outlay of less than two hundred thousand dollars. "He made a brilliant investment, and he's turned it into a big success," Fay Vincent said. "I'm no fan of his in some ways, but I respect him for that."

Eventually, the Yankees will probably be forced to share some more money with poorer teams in order to make the game more competitive. Bud Selig, the commissioner of baseball, has proposed upping the amount of revenue-sharing to fifty per cent of local revenues, and he clearly expects Steinbrenner to coöperate on the issue. "Can George be difficult?" Selig said to me. "Yes. Very. So can I. But, in the end, he loves the game as much as I do, and that's why we've always been able to fashion solutions to our problems."

Whatever happens on the revenue-sharing front—and any change has to be approved by the players, who would like to retain the current system—the Yankees' financial well-being seems assured. Even the fate of Yankee Stadium, an issue that has long stirred up hostility toward Steinbrenner, has been resolved, at least temporarily. Steinbrenner's repeated threats to move his club to New Jersey, or elsewhere, unless New York taxpayers coughed up money for a new stadium, were a big reason for his unpopularity. Last December, in one of the Giuliani administration's final acts, the city and the Yankees agreed to split equally the cost of constructing a new Yankee Stadium next to the old one. It remains to be seen whether Mayor Bloomberg will follow through on this pledge, which could cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, but Steinbrenner is hopeful. "We found a great way to do it," he said. "I don't feel like we got a Cleveland deal or a Milwaukee deal, but it was a good deal for both sides. We didn't get a steal."

Steinbrenner's hero is George Patton, who commanded the Third Army during the Second World War. He has watched "Patton," which stars George C. Scott, many times, and a few years ago he wrote the preface to a book entitled "Patton on Leadership: Strategic Lessons for Corporate Warfare," in which he praised Patton as a "go-to guy" and "the ultimate warrior"—a phrase he also uses to describe his favorite ballplayers, such as Paul O'Neill and Roger Clemens. Steinbrenner is also a big fan of Sun-tzu, the ancient Chinese military strategist and the author of "The Art of War." "It's like a Bible to me," he said. "I give it to some of my people. I say, 'This is what you must remember when we go forward.' Because we basically go to combat—whether it's baseball, basketball, or whatever it's in."

Steinbrenner still likes to play the role of field marshal, as I discovered when I met him a few weeks into the season. "These are busy times for me, pal," he said, getting up from his table in the restaurant of the midtown hotel where he stays when he is in New York. "Getting the team going. Getting 'em started. We have a few weak spots. We've gotta work on fixing them up." One thing Steinbrenner wanted repaired quickly was the health of the Cuban pitcher Orlando Hernández, a.k.a. El Duque, who had pulled out of that night's game, forcing Roger Clemens to replace him. "El Duque has a little stiffness in his neck," Steinbrenner explained. "I'll give him a little stiffness behind his ear when I see him." Shane Spencer, whom Torre had named as his starter in right field, was another worry. "Last night, Spencer made a terrible error," Steinbrenner said with an anguished look on his face. "From third base, trying to go home on that ball. That might have been the ballgame, and he goes home. It's a cardinal rule in Little League that until the ball is past the pitcher you don't run. You've got no chance."

He conceded that some things had gone well, especially the return of David Wells, who had slimmed down and was pitching strongly. "That was a smart move by the team to get him," he said. (It wasn't "the team" that signed Wells, of course; it was Steinbrenner.) He was also confident that Jason Giambi was settling in after a shaky beginning, which had earned him one of Steinbrenner's "Hamlet" pep talks. During the previous night's game, Giambi had hit two home runs. "He's getting rolling," Steinbrenner said. "He's starting to enjoy himself."

The Yankees weren't the only thing on Steinbrenner's mind. The Nets and the Devils were both preparing for the playoffs. Back in the early sixties, when he was still a shipbuilder, Steinbrenner bought the Cleveland Pipers, who played in the short-lived American Basketball League. The Pipers and the league both went bankrupt, and it took Steinbrenner years to pay off his fellow-investors. Almost forty years later, he was finally enjoying some basketball success. That morning, he had called Lou Lamoriello, the Nets' chief executive, to congratulate him. "I put him in there. He's just like me," Steinbrenner said of Lamoriello. "They say it's down to Rod Thorn"—the general manager of the Nets. "Rod's a very good basketball guy, but he needed a rod up his ass. Lou gave him that."

Steinbrenner hadn't failed to notice that the Knicks and the Rangers, two teams owned by Cablevision and whose games are shown on MSG, had not made the post-season. "To have two teams on the New Jersey side of the river in the playoffs—that's not good for the Garden teams," he said gravely. Far from being resolved rapidly, as Steinbrenner had hoped, the dispute between the Yankees and Cablevision had escalated into a legal and public-relations battle, with both sides running television and print advertisements to make their cases. Several columnists had called on Steinbrenner to step in and settle the matter, but he was still refusing to get involved. "They're saying, 'Get in the middle of it, George. Take charge!'" he told me. "No way. I've got a good man in Leo Hindery"—the chairman of the YES Network—"and he's brought us this far." All the same, some of the media criticism was starting to irritate Steinbrenner. "The *Times* hit me pretty good," he complained. "And the *Times* is a wonderful paper. It's a great paper. But they also own part of the Red Sox, and the Red Sox are my archrivals. Nobody ever talks about that."

Steinbrenner's protests that he had nothing to do with the Cablevision stalemate ought not to be taken at face value. Hindery gives him someone to hide behind, but by refusing to intervene Steinbrenner has condoned Hindery's brinkmanship, which has helped prevent a settlement. A banker who played a part in raising the money for YES told me that everybody involved in the formation of the new network was aware of the danger that Cablevision might refuse to give it channel space. The banker believes that Hindery and Steinbrenner took a calculated gamble that, if this were to happen, public outrage would quickly force Cablevision to fold. Unfortunately, from Steinbrenner's viewpoint, they underestimated how much they had already alienated Chuck Dolan and his son James, Cablevision's chief executive. "I think Cablevision will stay out unless they see themselves losing a lot of customers," Rupert Murdoch told me recently. "So far, they've lost about five thousand out of three million. It's nothing. Even if they lose twenty thousand or thirty thousand, they'll sit it out. I think if they lost a hundred thousand they'd have to cave."

At the end of May, Steinbrenner visited New York again, for a three-game series against the Red Sox, who had started the season in scorching fashion. He flew in on Friday night, when the Red Sox won, 5–2. The Yankees won easily the following day, setting up a rubber match on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in the Bronx. Steinbrenner had invited General Tommy Franks, the commander of the American forces in Afghanistan, to throw out the first pitch, and before the game the four-star General and his wife chatted with Steinbrenner and some of his cronies in the owner's spacious office, on the fourth floor of the grandstand. Franks presented Steinbrenner with an ornate Bowie knife, a fitting gift from a Texan soldier. In return, Steinbrenner gave Franks a blue Yankees jacket, which the General pulled on over his civvies. Somebody asked Franks if he was a Yankees fan. "Of course," he replied. "All America is a fan of the Yankees."

More than fifty-five thousand people had packed into Yankee Stadium, an unusually high number of them Red Sox fans, and the atmosphere was building. Shortly after one o'clock, Franks delivered the ceremonial toss to loud applause. Then Bob Sheppard, who is in his fifty-second year as the Yankees' announcer, asked the packed house to direct its attention to center field, where a group of West Point cadets presented their colors during the national anthem. Steinbrenner, who had moved outside to the owner's box, stood as upright as a flagpole, his right hand on his heart, his eyes hidden behind aviator shades. His pride was on open display, and not just his pride in the Yankees. A couple of nights previously, the Nets had reached the N.B.A. finals, thus completing a remarkable season. "It's too much for an old man," Steinbrenner said when I asked what it felt like to be involved with two winning teams, but he clearly didn't mean it.

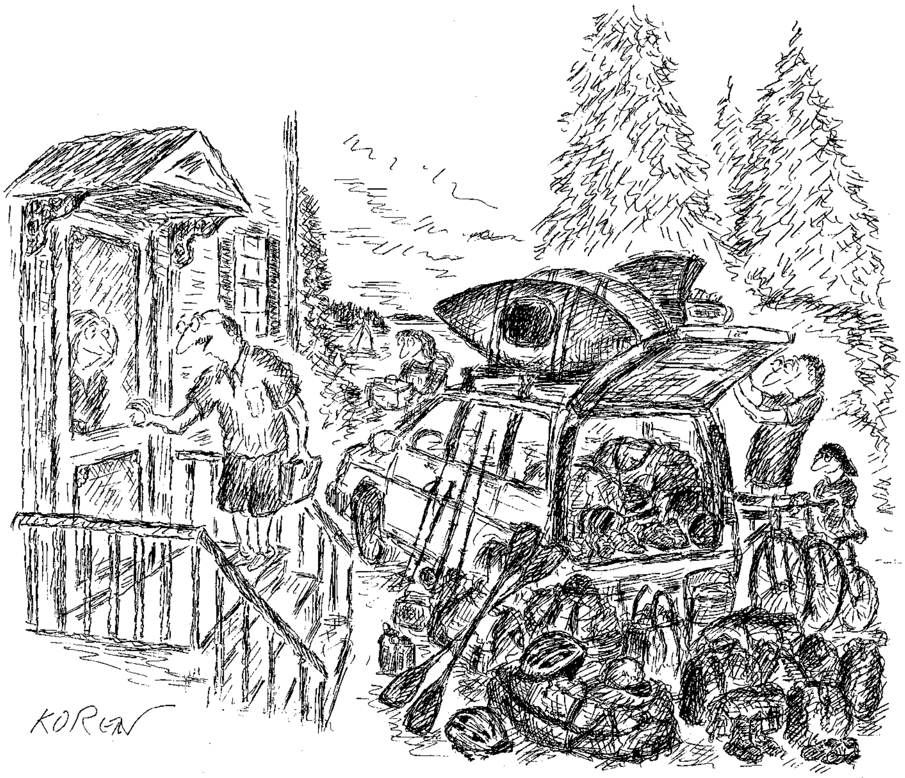
On this day, however, his beloved Pinstripers disappointed him. The Boston hitters shelled Ted Lilly, the young Yankees pitcher, for four runs, and then meted out similar treatment to the reliever, Ramiro Mendoza. By the bottom of the sixth, the home team was losing 7–1, and Steinbrenner was getting frustrated. "Lilly didn't have anything," he complained. "That's the problem with putting kids in there. When Pettitte and Hitchcock come back from the disabled list, he'll go to the bullpen. But Mendoza didn't have anything, either." While Steinbrenner was talking, Bernie Williams grounded out and Jason Giambi popped out, both on big swings. "They're all trying to hit home runs," Steinbrenner complained. General Franks tried to make light of the situation, offering to go down to the bullpen and warm up, but Steinbrenner remained distraught. "Some of our players just aren't delivering," he said testily, singling out Derek Jeter, the Yankees shortstop, who had been outplayed throughout the series by his opposite number, Nomar Garciaparra. Steinbrenner is normally a big fan of Jeter, but he also pays him nineteen million dollars a year and he expects him to perform on big occasions.

He tried to console himself by saying that the Red Sox couldn't sustain the blazing pace they had set early in the season. During the seventh inning, Rudolph Giuliani and his girlfriend, Judith Nathan, arrived. Steinbrenner hugged the former mayor. Then he disappeared inside, and he didn't come back. Most of the Yankees fans in attendance seemed to empathize with the Boss. By the time Shane Spencer grounded out to end a brief Yankees revival in the bottom of the ninth, the stands were almost empty, although Franks and Giuliani were still there, hoping for a minor miracle. When it didn't materialize, they headed for the exit, bemoaning the Yankees' performance along with the rest of the crowd. Their mercurial host had vanished.

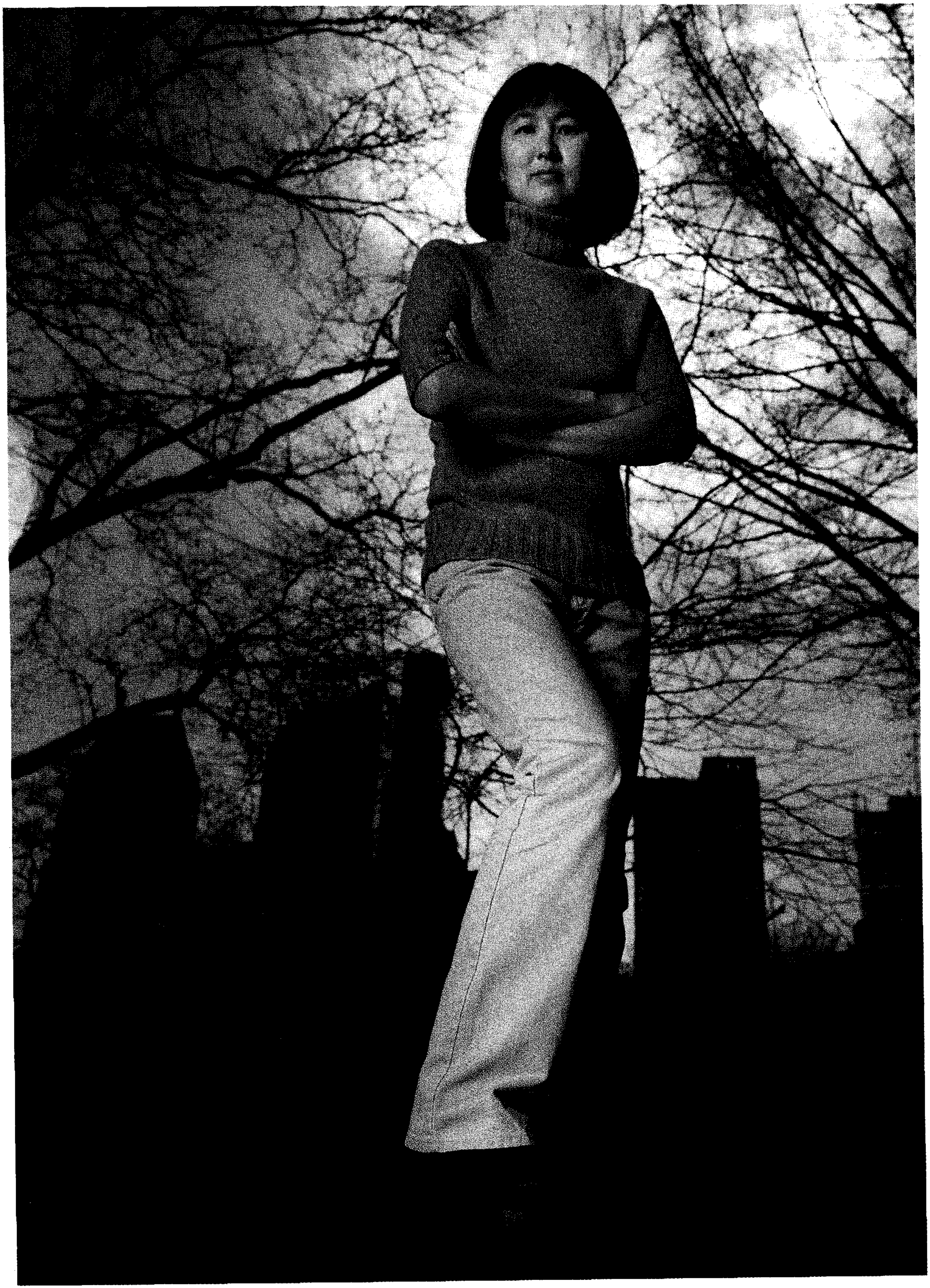
Steinbrenner is an easy man to lampoon, but he has demonstrated that, in professional sports, at least, there is still a place for a fanatical, pigheaded rich guy who wants to show the world. "What drives people into sports ownership is ego, ego, ego, including myself," he told me during one of his more introspective moments. "Nothing is as important as ego." Egomania may be an unattractive trait, but attempting to reduce sports to just another business line rarely works, as the News Corporation, the Walt Disney Company, and Cablevision have discovered. Athletes are emotional creatures who respond to the human touch, even if it occasionally feels more like a cattle prod, and perhaps it takes a Steinbrenner or a Ted Turner to bring out the best in them.

Yankees fans, who once spent most of their time wondering how to get rid of Steinbrenner, now worry what will happen if he makes good on his threats to retire. They look at the Atlanta Braves and see signs of decline now that Turner is no longer in a position to protect the players and coaches from the accountants at AOL. It is not out of the question that the same thing could happen to the Yankees. "Sooner or later, George isn't going to be here," Bill Madden muses. "And what's scary is what will be here in place of him."

How long will Steinbrenner continue? "I see pals of mine that have retired, and I don't envy them their lives," he said during one of our last conversations. "But I want to get there. I'm way over the mark. I had to be sure that my kids had the same hunger for it that I have—for winning and having great teams. I am now sure that they are of the same ilk." If that is indeed the case, Hank Steinbrenner, Hal Steinbrenner, and their brother-in-law Steve Swindal are keeping their ambitions well hidden. Hank, who is forty-four, looks after the family's stud farm; Hal, who is thirty-three, oversees its property interests. Neither of them has much to do with the Yankees. Swindal, a Tampa native who is married to Steinbrenner's older daughter, Jennifer, works full time for the ball club, but few expect him to take over. I called all three of them to ask about the future of the Yankees, and none of them got back to me. Still, despite the doubts about who or what will succeed him, Steinbrenner insisted that he is thinking about setting a date for his retirement. "Now, of course, you may find there are members of the family that don't want you home the whole time," he added. "So I've gotta find some new interests. I'm not a hunter or a fisherman who could spend the rest of his life that way." ♦



"Carol, our guests are here, along with the entire L. L. Bean catalogue!"



Lin's strange gift is to know in advance how people will respond emotionally to her work. Photograph by Matthias Clamer.

THE RELUCTANT MEMORIALIST

Maya Lin tried to put the business of monuments behind her. Then came September 11th.

BY LOUIS MENAND

One afternoon this winter, Maya Lin walked with me from SoHo, where she has her studio, across Canal Street and down Church Street to the place where the World Trade Center once stood. Lin is a friendly, unpretentious woman. She is slight—she stands a little under five-three and weighs just over a hundred pounds—and though she is forty-two, she could pass for twenty. She dresses, on most days, like a college student who woke up late for class—corduroys, a turtleneck, and a hairband. She takes unexpectedly long strides, however. It's hard to keep up with her.

Lin did not especially want to visit the World Trade Center site with me. Within forty-eight hours of the September 11th attacks, calls and faxes had started coming in to her studio. Would Lin comment on the destruction of the World Trade Center? Would she write an op-ed piece about it? Would she be quoted in a magazine story on the New York City skyline? Would she provide remarks for an article about rebuilding downtown, prepare a sketch of a memorial for "The Early Show" with Bryant Gumbel, join a panel on the meaning of memorialization, submit to an interview with Barbara Walters? It is not her favorite kind of attention.

"I have fought very, very hard to get past being known as the Monument Maker," she told me shortly before we decided to take our walk. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated twenty years ago, is the work with which Lin's name will be forever associated. In a career that, since then, has included houses, apartments, gardens, sculpture, landscape architecture, public art, a library, a museum, a line of furniture, a skating rink, clothing, two chapels, and a bakery, she has designed two other well-received memorials: the Civil Rights Memorial, in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1989, and the Women's Table, commemorating the admission of female students to Yale, in 1993. But two years ago, in "Boundaries," a book in which she reviewed her major works, she announced that she was retiring from the monument business. She had only one more memorial she wanted to make, she said: a work about the extinction of plant and animal species. Then came September 11th, and although she declined the requests for articles, sketches, and interviews, she couldn't get the problem of a memorial out of her head. "Extinction is the last of my memorials," she told me. "But I cannot stop thinking about the World Trade Center. I just can't."

On September 11th, Lin was in Colorado, where she and her husband, Daniel Wolf, spend the summers with their two young daughters. She woke up a little before the second tower was hit and called her brother, Tan, who lives on the Bowery, to see if he was all right. Tan had been watching the towers burn from the roof of his building. Lin and her husband returned to New York that weekend, and went to dinner at a restaurant in Tribeca, as many people were doing to help support businesses downtown. At some point, she noticed that her hand, which she had rubbed inadvertently against a wall, was smeared with ash. It was a while before she could bring herself to wash it off.

Lin thought about trying to get access to Ground Zero in those first few weeks, when people with connections were being issued hard hats and let into the site, but she decided not to. "I didn't want to be a tourist," she told me. She saw the ruins later in the fall, when they were still smoldering, from an office in the building at One Liberty Plaza. She could see the palm trees in the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, all dead from the smoke. When the public viewing platforms went up, though, her instinct was to avoid the place. It's not that she deprecated people's desire to see the site. You can hardly be a builder of successful memorials and have no sympathy for the need to gaze on places of sadness and destruction. There is nothing at most Civil War battlefields today except grass, trees, and the occasional plaque; they are visually indistinguishable from a dozen nearby spaces that just happen not to be Civil War battlefields. But every year thousands of people travel miles to stand in them and brood. What distressed Lin about the Trade Center site was the prefabricated quality of the experience—the tickets people had to get, the lines they stood in, the memorabilia being hawked on the sidewalks. Spontaneity is important to her—emotions that mean something should somehow surprise you—and she felt that the lines and the souvenirs regimented people's response.

There was a five-minute wait when we arrived at the platform. It was chilly, the sidewalks were congested, and it was obvious that Lin had no inclination to stand in line. The other side of her general pleasantness is that you quickly know when she is not so pleased. She doesn't say much; she just, very politely, shuts off. We turned around, and ten minutes later we were sitting in a café on Broome Street. Lin ordered a cup of tea, and started talking. Something about being near the Trade Center site seemed to lift an inhibition, because a few days later she called to say that she couldn't believe she had talked so much. What she meant was that she couldn't believe she had talked so much about the two subjects that she had made up her mind to discuss as little as possible: the World Trade Center and the Vietnam Memorial.

September 11th turned a page in every New Yorker's life. It is a permanent before-and-after moment. For Lin, it also happened to coincide with a transitional period in her career. A number of large-scale projects were finishing up, and she felt that she had finally succeeded in defining herself as something more than the designer of the Vietnam Memorial. That was the reason she had written "Boundaries." But she wasn't quite ready to begin the next phase.

Lin's work is self-consciously beautiful, because she is obsessed with harmony—how we fit into the world and how the world shapes us. "Site-specificity" is a cliché in contemporary art and architecture, but, if it is an instinctive mode for any artist, it is for Lin. Her impulse is not to impose form; it is to evoke form out of what is given—the landscape, the building, the light, the natural materials at hand. This impulse expresses itself in work that is simple, graceful, and, in its detachment, a little Zen.

But Lin is not a Zen-like person. She is a worrier. She worries that people think she's abrasive, and she worries that she comes across as someone who doesn't know what she's doing. She thinks that she is too self-absorbed ("People would be amazed at how part of me has lived like the ostrich, with its head in the sand," she said to me once, when I asked about her life outside work), but distractions make her nervous. The polished, stripped-down, carefully situated work that she creates is the product of a permanently anxious sensibility. If you saw that a smear on your hand was ash, you would probably take note of it, but you would not be spooked by it. Lin was spooked by it, because the other side of her aesthetic is an apprehension of disaster. Her work is about order, harmony, and serenity, but it is also about what order and harmony are created to defy—waste, damage, loss, solitude, death. Her inability to speak of her work in those terms is probably a condition of her compulsion to make it.

If you ask Maya Lin what type of artist she is, one of the things she will say is "Midwestern." She was born in Athens, Ohio, twenty miles from West Virginia, on the fringes of the Appalachians. Although her architecture shows Scandinavian and Asian influences (she studied in Denmark and Japan), almost all the rest of her work—the memorials, the sculpture, the landscape art, the installations—takes its inspiration from the hills, stones, and streams of southeastern Ohio.

Athens is the home of Ohio University, where Lin's mother (who still lives there) taught English and Asian literature, and where Lin's father (who died in 1989) was the dean of the college of fine arts. Through sixth grade, Lin went to the university's laboratory school, Putnam—a place where, in the progressive tradition of university laboratory schools, the children were encouraged to pursue their own interests. "By second or third grade, I was doing my own thing," she says. "I still resent being told what to do in any way, shape, or form. I'm sure it's clinical." After Putnam, she went to public school, where she was first in her class.

On your mark...
Shanahan

EXTREME SHEEPHERDING

Athens, she says, was idyllic. Still, she felt out of place. There are two forms of adolescent alienation: the kind where you reject your family and embrace your peers, and the kind where the sentiments run the other way. Lin's was the second type. She never had a close friend after sixth grade; she didn't wear makeup or go to the prom. "I was pretty much isolated by the time I got to high school," she told me one day when we were sitting in the back of her studio, in a space she reserves for her art projects. There was a model behind her for what will eventually be a room-size sculpture based on the contours of the ocean floor (which look a lot like the hills of southeastern Ohio). "I didn't get it. I never listened to, like, the Beatles. I was sort of in my own little world, and didn't realize there was any other world.

"I think some kids are just that way," she said. "I think it was also the way my parents felt in Athens." Lin is descended from two highly accomplished Chinese families. Her paternal grandfather, Lin Changmin, was a scholar, poet, and diplomat whose daughter Lin Huiyin, Maya Lin's aunt, married Liang Sicheng, the son of the prominent political reform leader Liang Qichao. The couple were educated at the University of Pennsylvania, in the nineteen-twenties, and when they returned to China they dedicated themselves to recording and preserving China's architectural heritage. Liang and Lin were also designers of some eminence. Liang was involved in planning the United Nations headquarters, in New York, in 1947. After the Communists took over, he and Lin helped design the new national flag and the Monument to the People's Heroes, in the center of Tiananmen Square. Maya Lin's mother, Ming-Hui, known as Julia, is the daughter of a prominent Shanghai eye specialist who received his medical education at Penn. Both of Julia's grandmothers were doctors; one of them was trained at Johns Hopkins.

Lin's parents left China as the Communists were coming to power. Her fa-

"I see the empty nest as a place where an apartment can finally grow up."

• •

ther, Huan, called Henry, got out fairly easily. He had been an administrator at Fuzhou Christian University, and left in 1948 for the University of Washington, on a scholarship to study education. Julia, though, had an odyssey. Her father used his American connections to get her admitted, as a junior, to Smith College, but the telegram informing her that she had been offered a scholarship arrived the day the Communists marched into Shanghai, in May of 1949. She was smuggled out of Shanghai on a junk; her passport, visa, letter of acceptance, and ten dollars were sewn into the collar of her dress and her slippers. It took her a month to get to Hong Kong; she didn't make it to Smith until October. She met Henry Lin at the University of Washington, where she went for graduate work, in 1951. Her father lost his practice in the Cultural Revolution, and he died in 1975. She never saw him again.

When Maya Lin was growing up, her parents rarely talked about China. Neither she nor her brother speaks Chinese, and she thinks it's funny that she holds her chopsticks incorrectly (though she does favor Chinese food). She didn't know the story of her mother's escape until Julia took her and Tan to Shanghai, in 1985. She didn't know that her relatives had designed the Monument to the People's Heroes—that there is, so to speak, monument-making in her genes—until I mentioned it to her last winter. She did not have a sense of dispossession instilled in her. It was subtler than that; she was brought up by people who had been dispossessed, and who were determined that she and her brother should never know the experience.

She did understand that they were cut off from the rest of the family, and she appreciates the damage to her parents' lives more clearly now. "The home they knew was completely changed by history," she said to me. "There wasn't a place of nostalgia to go back to. I saw it in my father's face after Tiananmen Square." (The pro-democracy demonstrations there were suppressed in the spring of 1989.) "He knew that China wouldn't even begin to return to an open-door policy in his lifetime. It was extremely upsetting. I still can go home, to the house I grew up in, and I know where some of my toys still are, and my dresses. And to wipe it out, to leave home at the age of eighteen or twenty . . ."

After high school, Lin went to Yale. She loved it. "I didn't have an adjustment problem," she told me when I asked her what it was like to go from Athens to the gritty city of New Haven in 1977. "In a strange way, I found kids that were just like me, and for the first time I felt that I fit in." She started out in the sciences, with the thought that she would become a field zoologist. When she learned that Yale's program involved vivisection, she quickly abandoned that idea. She didn't know, at first, what to do instead; but she loved art and she loved math—so, she explained, architecture seemed perfect.

Lin didn't take any architecture courses in her first two years at Yale, but when she finally began the program, she said, "I just focussed, and I did nothing but. I would schedule my classes so they met once a week, and then I would pull all-nighters, like every other unhealthy little architecture student." One semester, she never went to the library. She simply obsessed about her buildings, and that has been her practice ever since.

After her design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was chosen, in 1981, she spent a year in Washington overseeing its development, taught at Exeter for a summer, and then entered the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She dropped out after less than a semester, because it was too difficult to deal with the issues surrounding the construction of the memorial and do her schoolwork at the same time. The next fall, she went back to Yale. She took her degree from the School of Architecture in 1986, and received an honorary doctorate from Yale in 1987. She has remained devoted to the university. Last December, Yale's president, Richard Levin, asked Lin if she would be willing to stand for election as an alumni fellow of the Yale Corporation. Another Yale graduate, a New Haven pastor named W. David Lee, had already put himself forward as a candidate representing the interests of the unions, from which he had accepted donations, and the community. Lin declined to campaign personally against Lee—she believes that it's inappropriate to have an agenda when you serve on a board—but she was not happy to find herself cast as the alternative to reform. (Alumni and former Yale administrators did campaign against Lee, though, and Lin ended up defeating him handily, in an election in which three times the usual number of alumni voted.)

"It was miserable," Lin said when I asked her about her year in Washington. "It was beyond miserable." There is still indignation in her voice when she gets on the subject of the building of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. She hates Washington, and has rarely been back since her work was finished. "I think it is actually a miracle that the piece ever got built," Lin wrote about the memorial in "Boundaries." When art and politics collide, it is usually the art that gets totalled; that time, against all the odds, it didn't.

Still, beating the odds is not the same as a miracle. For a miracle, there is no explanation, and, except for one element, the Vietnam Memorial is explicable. There was a need to honor the soldiers who had gone to Vietnam; and there was a flourishing contemporary-art movement, known as land art, that supplied the formal language for the piece that Lin designed. The people who planned the memorial—the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the arts professionals it hired to run the design competition—had specified in advance many of the features for which Lin's work is admired. They envisioned a mostly horizontal, contemplative work that did not disrupt the landscape of Constitution Gardens, the area in the Mall that was designated as the site. The competition guidelines stipulated that the monument "make no political statement regarding war and its conduct," and that it include the names of all 57,661 Americans who died in the war. (More names have been added since.) Lin's design was the unanimous choice of the competition jurors, in part because it seemed so uncannily to fit the criteria the planners had in mind. What did seem to come out of the blue was the person behind Entry No. 1,026 in the design competition, Maya Lin herself. Nobody had quite envisioned her.

Lin's design was an assignment for an undergraduate class. Yale gave seniors the option of creating a seminar instead of writing a thesis, provided they could find a faculty member willing to teach them. Eight seniors in the architecture department chose funereal architecture as their topic; F. Andrus Burr was the professor they got to teach it.

LAKE COMO

The searchlight of a February moon
at the end of the street

bare trees black railing
an eastern star set like a pearl atop a steeple

that shadows the doorway
where the one-armed card sharp squats

shuffling his deck on a milk crate
waiting for the No. 6 bus to discharge

the off-duty cop the seamstress
the drunken mechanic and the clerk on crutches

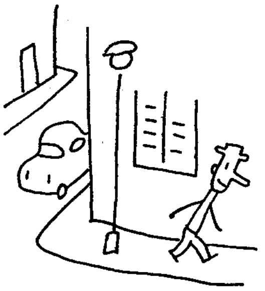
who pauses before his building to watch
the mechanic lose three dollars at blackjack

and then stiffly ascends the five flights
to his two rooms on a shaftway

hanging his coat on a hook
and sitting down at the table

on which this morning he placed
a soup bowl and spoon

Lin had become interested in funereal architecture while spending a semester in Denmark, during her junior year. (She has said that it was in Denmark that she first experienced racial prejudice: people thought she was an Eskimo.) She ended up studying in an area in the northwest corner of Copenhagen, called Nørrebro, which includes an enormous cemetery, Assistens Kirkegård. Hans Christian Andersen, Søren Kierkegaard, and other famous Danes are buried there. In the summer, people use the grounds as a park, and Lin got interested in the way the space had been integrated into the life of the city. Wherever she travelled after that, she told me, "I would always visit the cemetery."



In the fall of 1980, the class learned about the competition for the Vietnam Memorial and decided to make it an assignment. The students agreed to meet in Washington during the Thanksgiving break to look at the site. Lin stopped on the way back from Ohio. Constitution Gardens was empty that day except for a few Frisbee players, and she says that the solution simply popped into her head: she would cut into the earth and, in effect, polish it. A scar, the memory of a wound. It may be that the Frisbee players reminded her of the Copenhagen cemetery she had studied, for her memorial is, essentially, a gravestone in a park.

When Lin returned to Yale, she modelled the piece in the dining hall, out of mashed potatoes. Her submission

a tin of crackers and the crossword
puzzle he had been laboring over

beneath the gaze of his late wife
her color photograph propped up in a small frame

a young woman in a boxy dress and felt cap
waving shyly by the edge of a lake

where over her shoulder beneath a clear sky
a sailboat rides the wind

passengers on the polished deck
gazing at the glowing mountain peaks

the cypresses lining the shore
and the pink palazzi with ancient gardens

these men and women in white
who seem to live upon the water

gliding among themselves oblivious to strife
and all else that wears a body down

some sipping from crystal goblets
others just drinking in the light

—*Nicholas Christopher*

was a pastel drawing, with an essay explaining how people would respond to the work. She mailed the application just before the deadline, March 31, 1981. (Professor Burr was one of the losing entrants. He gave Lin a B-plus for the class.) Lin learned during graduation week that her design had been chosen. She was twenty-one.

In 1981, she wore her hair down to her knees. She was a myopic grind so indifferent to the rest of the world that she often didn't bother to wear her glasses in class. "I grew up in a college town in the middle of Appalachia," she explained, "so I'm still wearing Frye boots, and wearing my hair really long, and everyone's thinking I'm some sixties hippie. I have no idea what that's about. I'm not cutting my hair because I'm a good Chinese daughter. I'm wearing Frye boots because I'm a fashion disaster. And they connected me with anti-war and sixties radicals." She was also, of course, a woman, and her parents were Asian. The veterans decided that the best move would be to get her off the stage as fast as possible and let the grownups take over. They misjudged their designer. "I'm fairly clueless," Lin told me; "I'm also really stubborn."

Many issues drove the controversy that followed the selection of Lin's design, but one was a translation problem. The arts professionals knew how to read Lin's drawing: they would have recognized the form, the siting, and the materials as standard elements in land-art pieces. The veterans, on the other hand, had never heard of Robert Smithson or Richard Serra (neither had Lin at the time, she claims, but she had surely absorbed some sense of the land-art aesthetic). The veterans read Lin's pastel rendering as, at best, a weird shape. "First thing I thought of," said the man who conceived the campaign to build the memorial, Jan Scruggs, "was it looked like a bat."

Scruggs was not a man of aesthetic bent. He had been an Army rifleman in Vietnam, and was working for the Labor Department when, in 1979, he saw Michael Cimino's "The Deer Hunter" and, after a night of solitary drinking, decided to devote himself to finding a way to honor Vietnam veterans. All he wanted was a memorial; he had little interest in a work of art. "Let's put the names on the Mall and call it a day" was his philosophy. He had no problem with Lin's design only as long as no one else did. When objections began, he was disposed to compromise.

The fiercest of the protesters was a veteran named Tom Carhart, who had been awarded two Purple Hearts. Carhart, too, had entered the design competition. He had no artistic training to speak of—he had gone to the library and checked out a book called "Anyone Can Sculpt"—but he believed that only a veteran could know what would constitute a proper memorial for veterans. He referred to Lin's wall as an "open urinal," and he is supposed to have suggested, for an inscription, the words "Designed by a gook." In an op-ed piece in the *Times*, he described Lin's memorial as "a black gash of shame." He rallied a number of supporters. *The National Review* referred to Lin's design as "Orwellian glop." Tom Wolfe and Phyllis Schlafly called it "a tribute to Jane Fonda." Ross Perot said that it was "something for New York intellectuals."

Perot had given a hundred and sixty thousand dollars to fund the design competition, and he became a leader (along with Henry Hyde and Pat Buchanan) of the anti-Lin forces. Lin met Perot while she was in Washington. "He came over to the architect's office." (She had arranged for a local firm, Cooper-Lecky, to be hired as the architect of record; she had, of course, no architecture degree herself.) "I was making the model. And he's, like"—she did a Perot impression—" 'Doncha just think they need a *parade*?' I said, 'Well, they really need more than a parade.' " (It is entertaining to imagine this face-off between two not-large persons with not-small egos.)

In the end, the veterans betrayed her. Frederick Hart, who had been an apprentice to the designer of the Iwo Jima memorial, Felix de Weldon, had set his heart on getting the commission for the Vietnam piece (though he had been an anti-war protester, and had once been teargassed in a demonstration). Hart had approached the fund before the competition began and proposed "a pavilion structure, with design influenced by elements of a Buddhist pagoda . . . containing two works of sculpture, one a realistic depiction of two soldiers and the second a more abstract form of Plexiglas with internal images." The veterans rejected this proposal, believing that an open competition would be more in the democratic spirit. In the competition, Hart finished third, with a design he had made in collaboration with a landscape-architecture firm, EDAW. At first, opponents of Lin's design tried to get Hart and EDAW's substituted for hers, but EDAW declined to coöperate, so Hart and his supporters campaigned to add a representational sculpture to Lin's wall.

I asked Lin, while we were sitting in the café on Broome Street, if she had ever met Hart. "Yes, I did" was all she said at first. Well, was that unpleasant? "Yes, it was." She paused, and took a sip of tea. "He brought his wife in, and she just was glowering at me, it seemed. He said something like 'Well, my statues right here will improve your piece.' I just couldn't believe someone could be that rude." Opponents of Lin's design had proposed that one of Hart's statues be placed at the apex of Lin's walls, the center of the memorial, with an American flag set above the wall ("like a putting green" was Lin's comment at the time). Interior Secretary James Watt held up a building permit until the fund agreed to add the flag and a sculpture. Ultimately, both—Hart's sculpture was a rendering of three larger-than-life servicemen—were placed three hundred feet from one end of the wall. Lin received a twenty-thousand-dollar prize; Hart was paid more than three hundred thousand dollars.

Lin learned about the compromise not from the veterans, and not even from Cooper-Lecky, a firm she had chosen over the veterans' objections. She learned about it from the press. "They could have said, 'Maya, we had to do this,' " she said, about the veterans. "They didn't have the stomach to tell me." After that, she felt that she could trust no one. "I was an untouchable in Washington," she said. "I remember trying to call Bush—he's a Yalie, maybe he can help me out. They wouldn't have anything to do with me."

She was befriended by the Washington *Post's* architecture critic, Wolf Von

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ALBUM BY
EDWARD GOREY

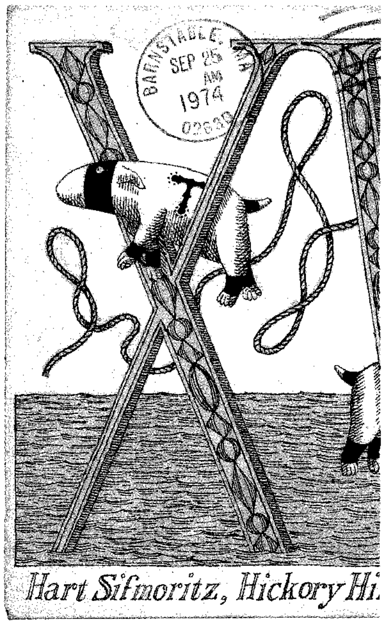
ENVELOPE ART

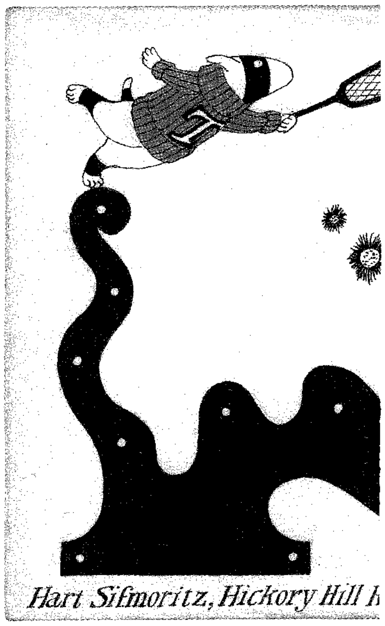
For years before his death, in April, 2000, Edward Gorey lived with a great deal of clutter, and as many as six cats, in a rambling house facing the village green in Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts. That house has recently been opened as a museum, and the clutter has been replaced by cases displaying hand-colored artwork and personal effects: Gorey's first pair of baby shoes; an inkwell and a set of watercolors; some of the rings he wore, half a dozen at a time; and excerpts from journals he had kept since childhood.

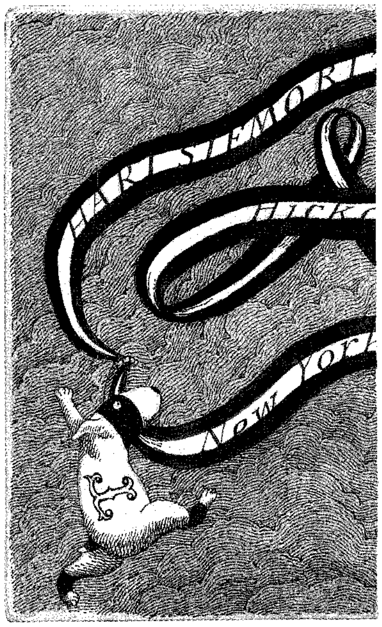
Andreas Brown, the owner of the Gotham Book Mart, who was a close friend of Gorey's and an executor of his estate, worked at the house every weekend for more than a year, cataloguing its contents and reading through the journals. It was a treat, filled with insights and mysteries. Gorey was an obsessive man; some of the notebooks were just lists of movies he had seen, where they were playing, and when. Others were similar lists of books and albums.

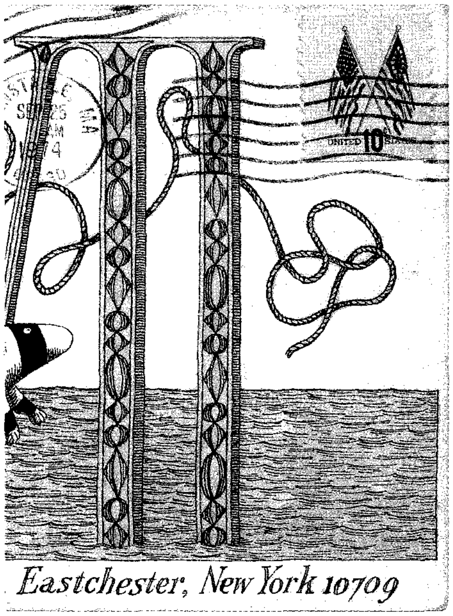
One sketchbook contained a meticulous record of a series of fifty illustrated envelopes; Brown had never seen them, but he recognized the addressee's name (altered here to Hart Sifmoritz; the addresses have also been changed). The men spoke, then got together—Sifmoritz brought the envelopes, and Brown showed him the journal. Sifmoritz received the first envelope, illustrated and colored, with a hand-lettered literary quotation inside, in July, 1974. The next one came a week later, another the following week. The ideas seemed to play off conversations between the two friends, things mentioned in passing. Soon Sifmoritz noticed that the envelopes were numbered—a series. He was not surprised to see the calculation behind the whimsy: Gorey's genius was as organized as it was prolific.

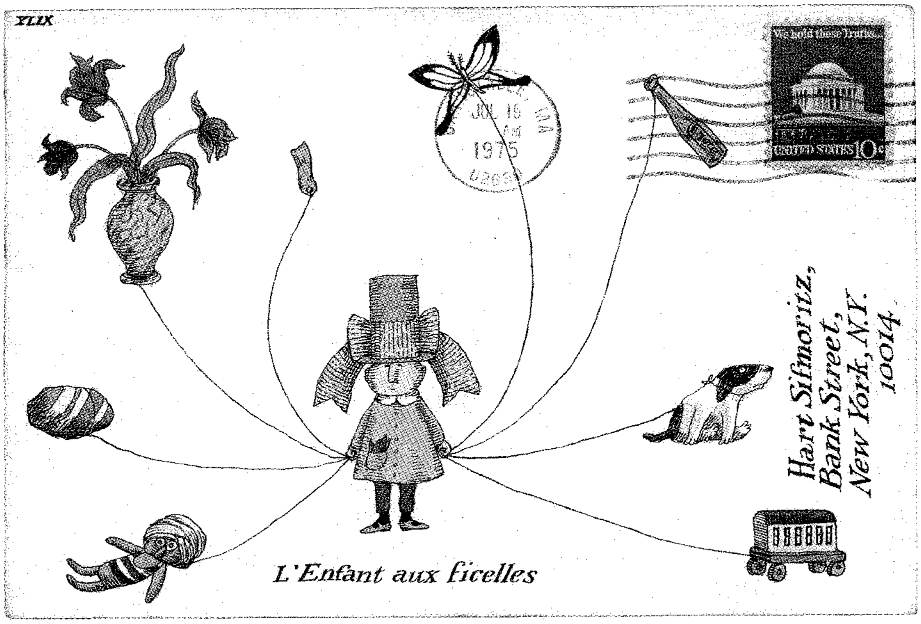
—*Susan Sheehan*

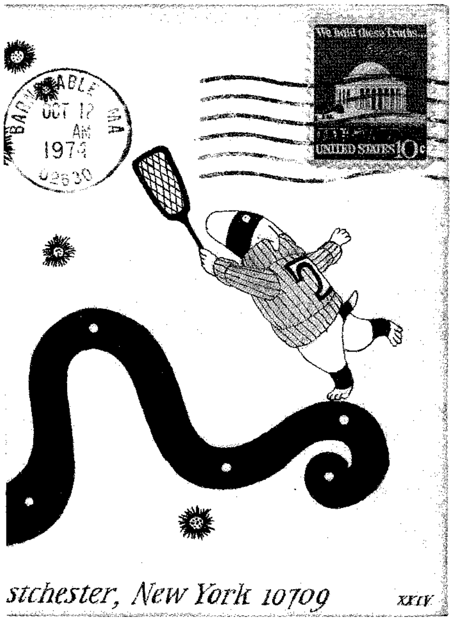


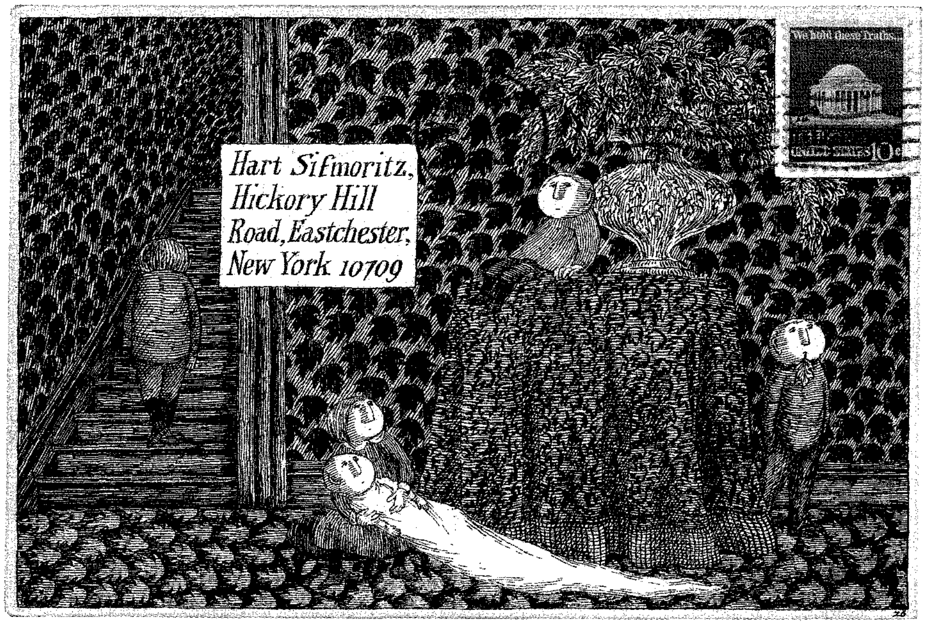





UNITED 10 STATES
Eastchester, New York 10709


XLIX
JUL 16 AM 1975
We hold these truths...
UNITED STATES 10c
Hart Sifmoritz,
Bank Street,
New York, N.Y.
10014
L'Enfant aux ficelles


BARNSTABLE MA OCT 17 AM 1974 02630
We hold these truths...
UNITED STATES 10c
stchester, New York 10709
XXIV


We hold these truths...
UNITED STATES 10c
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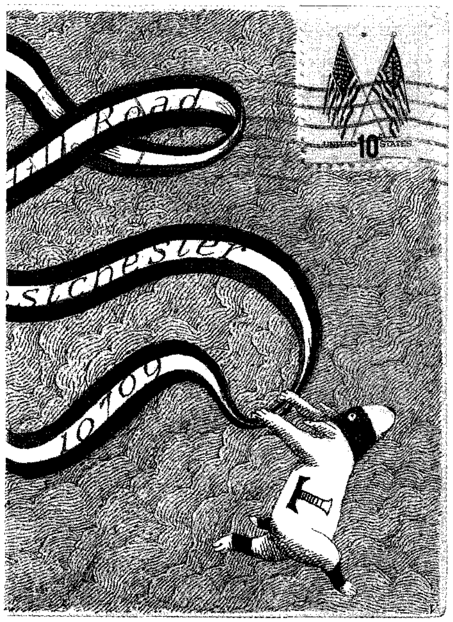
New York 10709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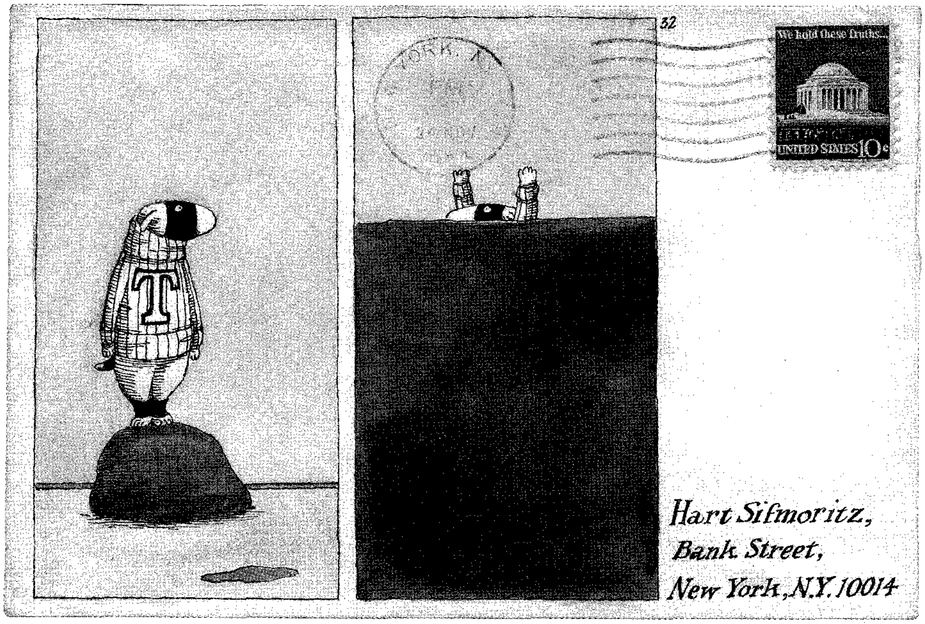
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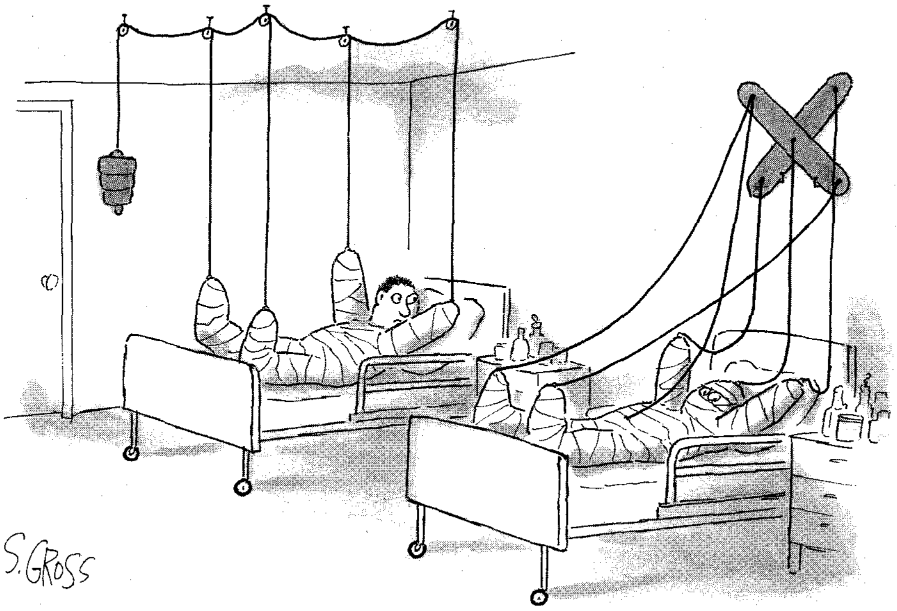
We hold these truths...
UNITED STATES 10c
Hart Sifmoritz,
Bank Street,
New York, N.Y. 10014



Eckardt, who, with his friend Judith Martin (known to the world as Miss Manners), took Lin in. When Lin felt she was being rebuffed by the veterans, Von Eckardt got her story into the *Post*. She ended up admiring the group most people in Washington fear and loathe. "The reporters were great," she told me. "I always felt that you knew what you were going to get."

She also had to fight over the listing of the names. She had them arranged chronologically, but some veterans worried that this would make it difficult for visitors to find a name, and they insisted that the names be alphabetical. Lin finally prevailed by showing them that more than six hundred people who died in Vietnam were named Smith. Seventeen were called James Jones. In her design, the names begin at the apex, starting with the year 1959, and run to the end of the right-hand wall and then back down from the left-hand side, ending at the bottom of the apex, with 1975. It is a circle, closed by the viewer. The wall is black granite, polished so that it will reflect. You look into the underground, where the dead are buried, and you see, behind their names, the ghost of your face.

Lin has a simple view of what the disputes boiled down to: she was the only one who understood that her design would work. She expresses no surprise that the memorial has been almost universally accepted as a success, even by some of its most obnoxious early critics. She always knew that she was right. When the wall was being constructed, the fund's project director, Robert Doubek, asked her what she thought people would do when they first saw it. "I think he wanted me to say, 'They're gonna love it,' " Lin told the *Times*, when she recounted the story. "And I said something like 'Well, I think they're going to be really moved by it.' What I didn't tell him is that they are probably going to cry and cry and cry."

People say that Lin's memorial is a popularization of the edgier kind of public-art pieces that were being made elsewhere at the time. (Serra's notorious "Tilted Arc," also, basically, a wall in a public space, was installed in the plaza of the Federal Building in lower Manhattan in 1981. It was removed, after protests, in 1989.) People say that the idea of a contemplative memorial was already imagined by the organizers of the competition. And people say that the memorial transcends politics. These responses all miss the brilliance of what Lin did. The Vietnam Memorial is a piece about death for a culture in which people are constantly being told that life is the only thing that matters. It doesn't say that death is noble, which is what supporters of the war might like it to say, and it doesn't say that death is absurd, which is what critics of the war might like it to say. It only says that death is real, and that in a war, no matter what else it is about, people die. Lin has always said that she kept quiet about her politics while her work was being built, and she has kept quiet since. Maintaining that the memorial is apolitical is the civic thing to do: reconciliation is what we want memorials to promote. But the conservatives were not mistaken. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is one of the great anti-war statements of all time.

There was talk at the time Lin's piece was built of closing the Mall to further memorials, but the National Park Service home page for the Vietnam Memorial describes it as consisting of "three components": Lin's wall, Hart's "Three Servicemen" (plus flagpole), and the Vietnam Women's Memorial, a sculpture of four figures, set three hundred feet from the opposite end of the wall from Hart's statues. The Women's Memorial, honoring "all women who served in Vietnam," was designed by Glenna Goodacre; it was dedicated in 1993, after years of lobbying. Lin thinks it's kitsch. Directly across from the Vietnam Memorial, on the other side of the reflecting pool, there is a Korean War Veterans Memorial—designed by Lin's old architect of record, Cooper-Lecky, and dedicated in 1995. Among its hodgepodge of elements is a long, polished black wall with faces etched into it, like reflections. It reads as a knockoff of Lin's design. "I can't go there," Lin said to me when I showed her a photograph. "I don't want to go there. It's painful. They cerebralize: it's, like, 'Oh, we'll fake the reflection.' You can't *fake* the reflection. It *is* the reflection." A huge Second World War memorial is next. The Mall has become a theme park.

The response is where Lin starts her work as a designer. She creates, essentially, backward. There is no image in her head, only an imagined feeling. Often, she writes an essay explaining what the piece is supposed to do to the people who encounter it. She says that the form just comes to her, sometimes months later, fully developed, an egg that shows up on the doorstep one day.

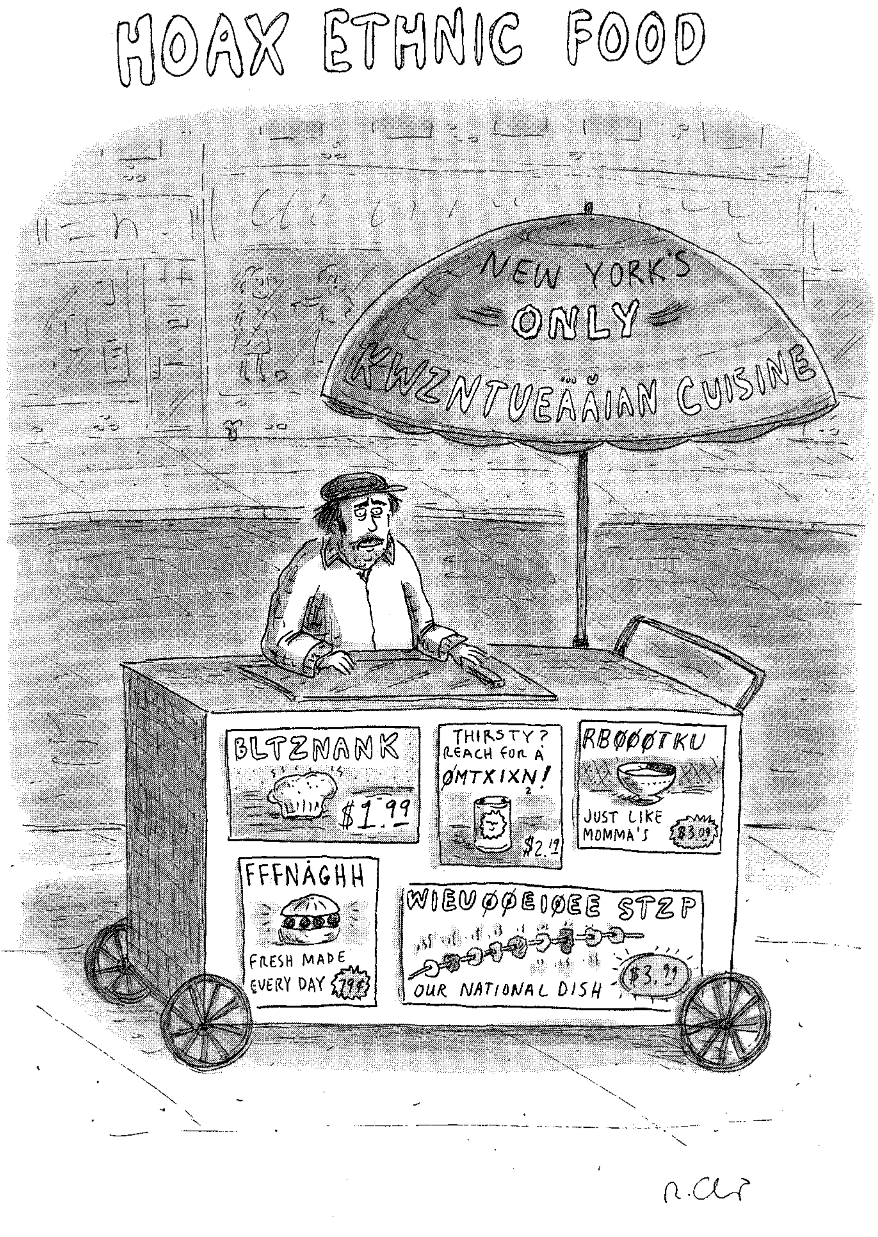
She rarely tinkers with it. She is, in other words, an artist of a rather pure and intuitive type.

This makes her an outsider in the world of architecture. Her work is not witty or allusive or high-concept; it has no pop elements. She is not a modernist or a formalist, either; she does not create pieces whose elements are in dialogue only with themselves. She's accustomed to being an outsider, or to feeling like one, and although she frets about it a little, she obviously cultivates the feeling. It gives her the edge (carefully veiled, most of the time) that she seems to require. In one of our conversations, she told me about a sculpture that she had been invited to create for the lobby of an office building designed by the architect Helmut Jahn, in Des Moines. She requested a site model of the lobby from Jahn's office. She received a model of the grounds, with the building represented by a Styrofoam block. The implication was that she was free to make something outside, but Jahn's building was off limits. "Here comes this solid box, like, 'Don't touch me,' " she said, "and so, of course, I had no choice. Upstairs, here's this two-story glass wall. It's not my style. So, if I ran water down the inside of it, I could very quietly subvert his entire space without ever creating architecture." She cracked the wall and put a stream inside. And how did Jahn take it? "He was fine," she said, quickly. Then she laughed. "I mean, we never really spoke," she said.

But Lin designs buildings, too, and one of her chronic anxieties is whether she is essentially an artist who practices architecture or an architect who makes art, and whether it matters. Frank Gehry, one of her teachers at Yale, told her to forget about the distinction and just make things, "the best advice—actually, the only advice—I've ever been given from the architectural world," she has said. It doesn't seem to have solved the problem, though. She admires Gehry's work, but she says that the person who inspired her was Richard Serra, whom Gehry brought in to critique student work. "Richard was amazing," she said. "I went through a very bleak graduate school, where I didn't get much positive reinforcement, and that was amazing—that one moment, where there's Richard, giving us a crit."

One of the few shows she has been to since her children were born (her older daughter is four) was Serra's, last fall, at the Gagosian Gallery, in Chelsea. The exhibition drew enthusiastic crowds and for some New Yorkers marked the spiritual reopening of downtown. Serra's huge pieces, "Torqued Spirals," which the viewer walks into by following a dauntingly high, tilting steel wall that spirals inward, she loved for their massiveness and their sense of surprise. The artists she identifies with are all men who work on a large scale: Serra, Smithson, Michael Heizer, James Turrell—people who make roads in the desert and turn canyons into works of art. Compared with their work, Lin's is contemplative and understated. But she dreams of bigness. "I want to find two or three of the most toxic sites in the world," she once said to me, "and then I could become an artist."

Gehry is probably right that it's pointless to worry about whether one creates as an artist or as an architect, but if you had to put Lin in either category you would call her an artist. One of the things driving her since she left Yale has been her need to "prove" that she can do architecture; she now feels that she has made enough buildings to settle that question. It is not clear who, exactly, was putting her to the test, and it probably doesn't matter. There is a kind of person whose indifference to what the rest of the world thinks is a spur to accomplishment: she will teach all these people in whose opinion she has no interest to have a good opinion



of her. It's a kind of Method acting. It gives a person her motivation. As Lin talked about her future work, it became clear that the artistic impulse—the impulse to make objects and place them in the world, rather than to erect usable structures—was dominant again.

Lin has had two shows of what she calls her "studio sculpture": "Public/Private" (1993) and "Topologies" (1997-1998). One of the pieces, "Topographic Landscape" (1997), is a large wooden field constructed of planks cut in undulating shapes and pressed together, so that the result looks like a landscape of hills seen from an airplane. It is sometimes exhibited with a work called "Avalanche," which is composed from fourteen tons of broken glass, poured into a mountainous pile in a corner of the gallery, and by several wall-mounted works that were created by shattering thick panes of glass. Lin's biggest broken-glass piece is called "Groundswell," created for the Wexner Center for the Arts, at Ohio State University: it uses forty-three tons of glass, raked into mounds. It is easy to appreciate these works as environmental installations (which is how Lin presents them): natural materials shaped in topological contours. It takes a little longer to see that they are also refinements on destruction—just as it takes a while to see that the Vietnam Memorial is made by repairing a tear in the earth. The paradox of land art is that it is programmatically environmentalist and deferential to natural forms but is also an intrusion into the natural world of the most aggressive kind. It doesn't simply stick human forms on top of natural ones; it reshapes nature itself. A certain degree of ego is needed to make it.

In late spring, Lin told me that she was suddenly immersed in new projects again. She has started her long-deferred memorial to extinct species—a many-sited, global project. She has accepted a commission to create environmental art in Yellowstone National Park: she will try to put Old Faithful, which is now treated as an amusement-park attraction, back into its natural setting. And she is making a work in the Pacific Northwest connected with the bicentennial of the Lewis-and-Clark expedition. The work, intended to commemorate the expedition from an environmentalist point of view, will be about the land that was there before Lewis and Clark arrived, about the continent we have lost.

"I am starting to talk quietly to various parties involved with the World Trade Center site, from people on the architectural and planning end to some groups of victims' families," Lin told me in June. "I'm just offering advice about what can be learned from the Vietnam Memorial." In spite of her reluctance to associate herself publicly with the memorialization of September 11th, she had, in fact, been taking calls from officials seeking her advice on the matter since shortly after the attacks. This spring, as the plans for the World Trade Center site started running on a very fast track—six master plans will be presented by the architectural and planning firm Beyer Blinder Belle this month, when the process for the selection of a memorial design is also scheduled to be announced—Lin began to have more frequent consultations with some of the parties to the redevelopment. She is not involved in the process as a potential designer, she told me; she's just someone whose experience, she thinks, might be helpful.

Lin's chief fear is that there is no unified vision for the redevelopment, and that the final plan will be an accretion of accommodations of every group that feels it has a stake in the site—the Port Authority, the landlords, the Community Board, local residents and businesses, victims' families, firemen, policemen, and so on. In the case of a memorial, she understands that it will be impossible to insulate the design process from the victims' families, but she hopes that when their need has been articulated the competition itself will be run by arts professionals, as it was for the Vietnam Memorial.

Lin is reticent about her own ideas for the site. The city has already been through two stages of memorialization, each successful, she feels, in giving form to feeling: the candles and flowers and heartbreaking "Missing" posters that appeared all over town in the weeks immediately following the attacks; and the Tribute in Light—the twin pillars of light that shone at the site this spring. "I think they're really magical," she told me when the lights went up. She was sorry to see them turned off after a month. But she was talking one day to a woman whose husband had died in the attack, and who complained about the lights: "We—we, the victims—don't think it does that much."

"It's this 'we' thing," Lin told me. "There's this authority that's going to say, 'This is mine first, then it's going to be yours, then it's going to be yours.'" That is part of what happened, she believes, with the Vietnam Memorial: some of the veterans couldn't relinquish what they regarded as their moral ownership of the piece. Lin thinks that the destruction of the Trade Center wounded everyone who watched it. "At some level, we all shared it," she said, "and that has never happened before in history. I hope that is really taken into account."

There is another challenge facing whoever designs a World Trade Center memorial, even if it is Maya Lin, and that is the legacy of Maya Lin. The Vietnam Memorial changed the popular understanding of what a memorial should be, and it thus set the bar very high for future memorialists. Now we expect that a memorial will be interactive, and that it will visibly move the viewer. If it doesn't make you cry, then it isn't working. It is Lin's strange gift—strange in a person admittedly so self-absorbed—to know how people will react to her art. She knew that visitors to the Vietnam Memorial would find it impossible not to touch the names chiselled into the wall. When she was an undergraduate, the names of Yale alumni who had died in Vietnam were being carved on a wall in Woolsey Hall, and she remembered that she couldn't walk past without touching them. At the Vietnam Memorial, you are also touching the shadow of your own hand, coming out of the darkness.

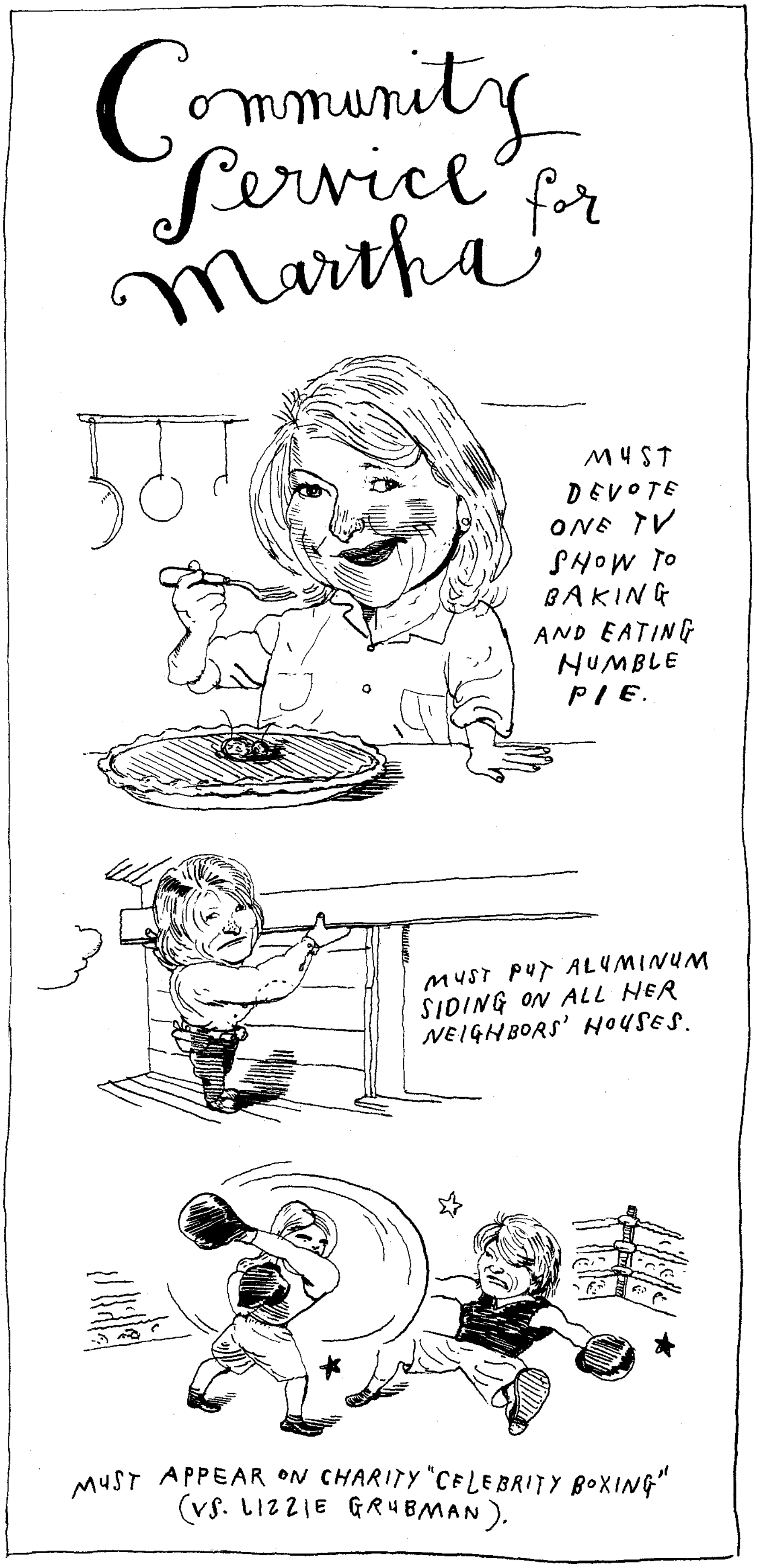
Lin believes that what enables her to create works that people respond to emotionally is her own emotional detachment, and that what enables her to address political subjects effectively is her apolitical posture. She has emotions and politics, obviously, but making art, for her, requires shutting down those parts of herself. A lot of contemporary culture seems to take the form of the opinion piece: you read the first paragraph—sometimes you read just the title—and you don't have to continue, because you know exactly what is going to be said. Everything is broken down into points of view, positions on a curve. If you're off the curve, or if you pay no attention to the curve, no one seems to know how to understand you, which is one reason that Lin has no interest in her own celebrity. She doesn't want to represent a point of view; she wants to make things.

In March, Lin attended the dedication of one of her installations, a winter garden in the lobby of the American Express Client Services Center in downtown Minneapolis. It is not a prepossessing site. The building is on a strip of large office structures; directly across the busy street is a large parking lot. The garden is inside a three-story glass box in the front of the lobby, visible from the street. Lin turned part of the exterior wall into a waterfall, which freezes in the winter, changing the view out from the lobby and the view in from the street. There are trees, and stone benches, which are echoed in the landscaping that Lin has designed outside the building. The distinctive feature of Lin's garden is the floor, which has been warped so that it has the contours of a hill (or a burial mound). The floorboards are the same as you would find in a bowling alley—that is, they read as level—but they have been curved to create rises and dips.

I arrived early for the dedication, and the floor was roped off. I wandered around looking at it from inside and outside the building. It was not especially impressive—a curved surface with a few trees and benches. Eventually, Lin showed up, there were speeches, and the rope was cut and we went onto the floor. It felt, weirdly, like walking in the woods, where each step is registered differently in the body—a little higher or a little lower than the eye picks up from the terrain. You experienced the floor through your bones. I asked her what she thought of the work. "I want a bigger floor," she said.

At noon that day, Lin gave a presentation about the new winter garden to American Express employees in the cafeteria. There was a big turnout, and the audience listened intently. Lin showed some slides, and explained how the work was related to some of her other pieces (like "Topographic Landscape") that use similar shapes. There were questions. One was from a woman who asked Lin if she could tell them how she designed the Vietnam Memorial. Lin laughed. "No," she said. "Not today." ♦

SKETCHBOOK BY BARRY BLITT


Community Service for Martha
MUST DEVOTE ONE TV SHOW TO BAKING AND EATING HUMBLE PIE.
MUST PUT ALUMINUM SIDING ON ALL HER NEIGHBORS' HOUSES.
MUST APPEAR ON CHARITY "CELEBRITY BOXING" (VS. LIZZIE GRUBMAN).

FICTION

HALF GONE

BY TIM O'BRIEN

On a balmy, sunlit afternoon in midsummer of 1997, a Saturday, nine and a half months after her surgery, Dorothy Stier removed her shirt, removed her bra, adjusted her wig, slipped into a pair of sandals, finished off a glass of lemonade, cursed, muttered to herself—"Enough of this!"—threw open the back door, marched across the patio and down a slate sidewalk that led to the driveway at the side of the house, where her husband, Ron, a senior vice-president at Cargill, had just finished washing and waxing his two prized Volvos. "The twins," he called them. Inanely, Dorothy thought. One was an aqua-blue station wagon, the other a boxy, oversized, much gadgeted silver sedan. Since acquiring the vehicles, a few weeks back, in what he too repetitively called a "package steal," Ron had lavished upon his new automobiles a preposterous mix of time and labor and paternal love. Which struck Dorothy as perverse. The man was already father to two spiffy boys. Not twins, perhaps, but well polished and mechanically sound. And he had a wife, too. A terrific wife. A wife, for that matter, who herself had once been awfully damned sporty, a vintage Bentley amid a fleet of utilitarian S.U.V. housewives.

Dorothy was angry. Beyond anger, in fact. She had been contemplating departure. The "where" was irrelevant: Paris or Hong Kong or Duluth, maybe even the frigid streets of Winnipeg. No matter. At that particular instant, which registered in the suburban heavens at just after 2 P.M., July 19, 1997—and which found Dorothy Stier twelve tipsy strides down the cement driveway, bare to the waist, committed, pinned to the glaring present by the bewildered gaze of her gardener, Jimmy—at that radiant, savage, remotely noble moment, Dorothy feared she might vomit. Her stomach wobbled. She had been propelled down the driveway by four or five vodka lemonades. Not quite drunk, perhaps, but she'd done her best. She lifted a hand as if to steady herself against the summer air. She nodded crisply at Jimmy, who glanced down at his hedge clipper, inspected it, and then looked back at her again. The man said nothing. Nor did Ron, whose attention was fastened on a sparkling hubcap and a pad of steel wool.

But, on the adjoining lawn, behind a low, freshly painted picket fence, Dorothy's dear friend and next-door neighbor, Fred Engelmann, a retired Marine Corps colonel, had plainly taken notice. Only a moment earlier, Fred had raised his garden hose by way of greeting. He had started to say something, to wave, but, midway, his jaw had locked into a curious smile. The hose had shifted in his hands. He was now watering his collie's doghouse.

"Freddie, darling!" cried Dorothy.

She released her grip on the air and fluttered her fingers at the man—thoughtful neighbor, confidant, domestic adviser, ex-assassin. Cheerfully, in a magnified, somewhat slurry across-the-fence voice, Dorothy cried, "Gorgeous day!"

"Roger that," Fred said.

"Wet doghouse!"

"Affirmative again," he said, and redirected the hose. Crinkles formed at the man's eyes. He had decided, apparently, to treat this with humor. "Catching rays, I guess?"

"That I am!" said Dorothy.

"Good, then. Good for you."

"Goodie for me! One second, I'll pop right over."

"Do that for sure," said Fred.

All this had consumed little more than a few moments of Saturday, July 19th. Ron had not yet turned to encounter his future. He knelt alongside the aqua-blue station wagon, his forehead puckered in concern over a scarred hubcap. Dorothy was six strides away, closing fast. Two or three elongated heartbeats elapsed: Jimmy pruning, Fred watering, a buzzing lawnmower, a child squealing, a radio playing Wagner, the two waxed Volvos gleaming like precious stones under a flagrant summer sun.

Ron pivoted on one knee.

He began to rise, stopped, squinted up at Dorothy.

"What's this?" he said.

"A wife," said Dorothy. She was now two strides away, accelerating.

"Jesus Christ."

"Look at me," said Dorothy.

He glanced at her shins.

"Higher," she said. "Pretend I'm a Volvo."

She had braked directly in front of him, seven or eight inches away. Her smile was genuine, even dazzling in the July sunlight, but it was also a foolhardy, belligerent, challenging smile.

"Suck it up," she said. "One look."

"Honey," Ron said.

He rose to his feet, threw an arm around her.

"Come on," he said. "Inside."

"One look. Don't be afraid."

"What is this?" Ron said. "Lady Godiva? Some nude freak show?"

"Freak?"

"I didn't mean freak."

"You did. Very distinct. Freak."

"Dorth, you're drunk."

She spun out of his arms and stepped back to present a vista. Her husband's gaze shifted into the summer distance, as though seeking a more easeful angle on the world, and then, with a hiss of dismay, more or less directly, he looked at her.

"Ghastly?" she said.

"No," he said. "It makes me want to cry."

"Touch me."

"We're in a driveway, honey. It's daylight."

"Go on. Touch."

"Don't do this," he said, almost in a

FRANCESCA WOODMAN, "PROVIDENCE" (1976)/BETTY AND GEORGE WOODMAN

whisper, as if the essential problem were one of volume. "I'm asking nice, Dorth. Let's please go inside. Fred and Jimmy, they're getting an eyeful."

"Half full," said Dorothy.

"Half full. Touché. Can we go inside?"

"You haven't looked yet."

"What the hell am I doing right now?"

"Pretending," said Dorothy.

"I'm not pretending."

"Oh, you are, you are," she said, and then she went up on her toes, extending her arms like a ballerina, and executed a twirl in the driveway. Again her stomach wobbled. It occurred to her that the radio music was coming from the aqua-blue station wagon. She hadn't realized Ron liked Wagner. She hadn't realized, in fact, that he cared much for music.

"There," Ron said. "I've looked."

"Barely. And you haven't touched."

He frowned and said, "Stop this."

"Not in four months," she said. "It's breast cancer, Ron. It's not the flu, you can't catch it."

"I realize that."

"No lookie, no nookie."

"Lay off," he said. "I know."

Dorothy felt a gust of sickness go through her. Stupidly, she giggled. She cupped her hands and called out across the picket fence, "One sec, Freddie!"

"Jesus," Ron said.

Fred waved a hand. Generously, the man kept his back to them, aiming his hose at a patch of giant sunflowers.

"Nice guy," said Dorothy.

"He sure is. Are we finished here?"

"I guess we are." She wanted to be held and loved, wanted to return these things, but she also wanted to notch up the hurt. She flicked her head at his shiny Volvos. "How're the twins?"

"They're good."

"Praise God. Huge load off my mind."

"You're jealous of cars?"

"Gosh, I don't even know," Dorothy said. "Am I jealous? Am I? Too tough to call. Hot cars, obviously."

Ron took a step toward the house. "I've had it. Gone. Out of here."

"Bye, then."

"I'm not begging," he said.

He didn't move.

Dorothy leaned back against the station wagon, tipped up her head, and let the sunlight strike her straight on. She was forty-nine years old. She was a Reagan Republican, mother of two, loser of a left breast, off kilter, terrified, stomach-sick, head-sick, co-chair with Fred Engelmann of the Highland Park Neighborhood Watch Committee. Also, at the moment, she was a woman in need of redefinition.

She looked at her husband. The anger was mostly gone now, replaced by a powerful, much more frightening weariness. "No sweat," she said. "Go watch a ballgame. I'm fine right here."

"Dorth, this isn't fair."

"Just go. Give me a minute."

Ron made a frustrated choking sound under his breath, then swung around, stalked up the driveway, crossed the patio, and went into the house.

For an instant Dorothy considered chasing after him. Put her shirt on, blame it on the lemonade. After all, he was a miracle of a husband. Wonderful father, wonderful partner. Reliable as a Volvo. Back in 1969, three months out of college, she had married him for his looks, which were boyish and lean and almond-eyed, a beautiful man, still drop-dead delicious even in middle age. But over twenty-eight years of marriage she'd come to appreciate him, even love him, for more substantial reasons. His good nature. His corny, old-fashioned ethics. The uncomplicated pleasure he took in providing for his family: an elegant home, expensive cars, memberships in two ritzy country clubs. True, Ron came off stiff in the personality department—"Anal Andy," the boys called him—but, at heart, he was a virtuous, honorable, suitably solid man. And through the whole breast-cancer nightmare he was all courage and confidence, citing survival statistics, clipping articles, calling her attention to recent advances in drug therapy. His relentless, can-do solicitude had almost killed her. Always the cheerleader. Rah-rahing the oncologists, rooting for the cure, clapping his hands and saying, "Atta girl," as she puked out the chemo poisons.

Couldn't blame him, Dorothy thought. Funny thing about breasts: husbands expect two of them. "Freak" was the word. And Dorothy herself wasn't all that crazy about mirrors or pool parties or negligees. Still, it seemed a pity that she'd been robbed of a husband and a decent sex life along with the killer breast.

Dorothy gave the station wagon a slap, switched off the radio, and joined Fred in his sunflower patch. "Freddie, Freddie," she said, and kissed the man's leathery cheek. "Look, I've had a drink or two, maybe seven, probably eight, so cut me some slack." She put her hands on her hips. She hid nothing. "Amazing flowers, lovely day. How's Alice? I haven't got a shirt on."

Fred chuckled and said, "Guess you don't."

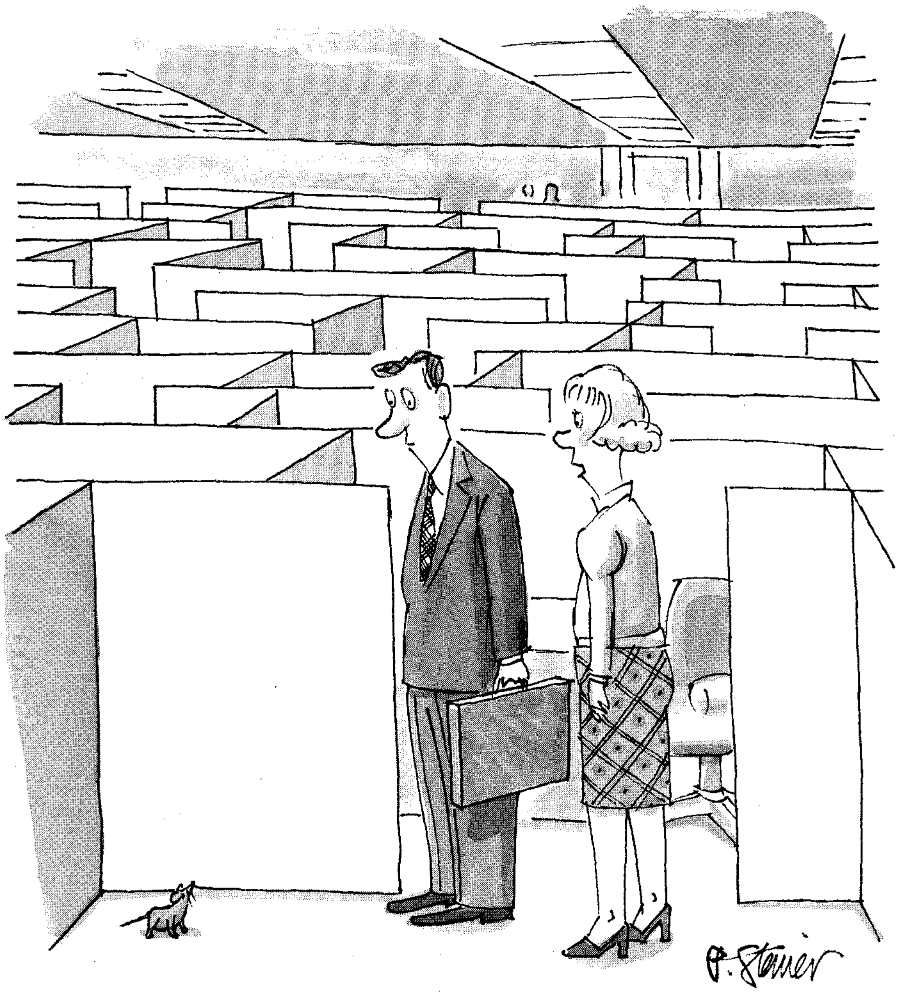
"I actually don't," said Dorothy. "Apologies."

"No need," Fred said. "Case closed. Over 'n' out."

"I'll go put a shirt on."

"No need for that, either."

Fred turned off his hose, took her by the elbow, and in his firm, courtly way escorted her into the shade of an ornate iron rose trellis. They sat on the lawn. For ten years, almost eleven, she and Fred Engelmann had been the closest of friends, trading gossip and Clinton jokes, co-purveyors of "Nuke the Liberals" bumper stickers. Together, they had joyfully maligned the modern age. They agreed upon certain bedrock principles—less is more in affairs of state, prayer in the schools, the indisputable un-Americanism of so-called affirmative action. With mutual good humor, mutual horror, they had grieved over what seemed a vast ice age of turpitude and moral amnesia. They laughed a good deal. They enjoyed each other. More than that, Fred seemed to understand Dorothy exactly as she most wanted



"If you just follow Sadie, she'll show you the way out."

to be understood. On occasion, especially after a few back-yard cocktails, it was as if the man had unlocked the code of her personal history, developed a dossier on her dreams: certain regrets and longings. Forks in the road. Missed opportunities. Years ago, as a Marine Corps colonel in Vietnam, Fred had been affiliated in some cryptic way with the Phoenix program, which, as he sketchily described it, had to do with terminal solutions. "Find 'em, fry 'em," he'd say, then his eyes would twinkle and he'd gaze at her—gaze through her—wink, and say, "Ghost work."

She'd never pressed him. But it was sometimes spooky. Nothing obvious, just that wink of his. The way he'd stare whenever she exaggerated or fibbed or put a little self-advertising spin on the world. Now, for instance. As she lay back on his lawn. As she kicked off her sandals and said, "No big deal, Freddie. Woman problems." She felt the man studying her. "The midlife follies," she said, too quickly. "My topless phase."

Fred smiled, cleared his throat, waited, kept smiling, gave her time to consider corrections and modifiers.

"I'm leaving him," she said.

"Gotcha. Ron trouble?"

Dorothy squinted at him. "Don't act like you didn't know."

"All right, I'm pinned down." His eyes were like clean, fresh water. "Maybe I noticed a couple things. One plus one. Did the math, figured out a wee bit."

"Not wee and not maybe," said Dorothy. "You notice everything. But even if I wanted to, which, for the record, I definitely do not want—and forgive me, Freddie, I'm stinko, totally lemonaded, just psycho-sicko shitfaced. Anyway, even if I actually decided to stick around, let's face it, how the heck could I? After this." She gestured at her chest. "God help the one-boobed nymphs. Down with the queen. The Highland Park crowd—me included, you included—they don't go in for risqué. Right now, I'll bet a couple hundred phones are ringing. Bet I'm on their naked-lady watch list."

"You're on mine," Fred said.

"Yeah, thanks. What about Alice?"

Fred grinned. "Put it this way, she had a peek out the window. Probably took to bed."

The man studied her chest, not coldly or indifferently but as if concentrating on some intricate endgame. Then he sighed and said, "Lock 'n' load. Old Fred's dyin' to hear this."

"I should really go put something on."

"Negative, let 'er rip," he said.

Dorothy could think of little to say. Words came to her—grotesque, rather be dead, how could this happen?—but it all sounded so banal and ridiculous. After a few garbled sentences, she stopped and stared up at the brilliant July sky. She couldn't withhold a short giggle. "It's not all Ron's fault. I don't much like touching me, either. Hate showers. Hate bedtime."

"Oh, yes?" Fred said.

"Very true. Hate. And I don't mean this chopped-liver mess up here. Not just the breast."

"Right," he said. "You don't mean that."

Dorothy nodded. "It's worse. Like my whole life's got cancer."

"Exactly," he said.

"And I'm not—" She exhaled. "What the heck was that, Fred?"

"What was what, darlin'?"

"That word. 'Exactly,' you said."

"Did I?"

"You did. It's *my* screwed-up life—how could you know?"

Fred gave her a pained, persecuted look, as though the question were unneighborly. "Not born yesterday," he said. He grunted, satisfied. "Mind if I take off my trousers? I'm an old bastard. Nothing to worry about."

"You're not old, Freddie."

"Yeah, well, older than you'd think. Ex-leatherneck, ex-widow-maker. Hell, we're all old."

He peeled off his pants, tossed them aside, looked across the picket fence, then waved and saluted. Ron stood watching them from the patio. He seemed lost and angry. He did not salute back. After a few moments, he turned and went inside.

"Upset husband," Fred said mildly.

"Who isn't?"

"Good point. But if I was in your naked-lady shoes I'd probably trot back to the drawin' board and rethink my tactics. Not too late. Except, of course, this problem we've got here, it's not just Ron, right?" He winked at her. "Can I ask something?"

"You may."

"Yeah, right. May. Ever vote Democrat?"

Dorothy glanced up. It was not the question she'd expected. "Vote Democrat?" she said. "Maybe once."

"May I guess?"

"You may, sure," Dorothy said, "and I've got this strange feeling you can."

"Sixty-eight primary. Gene McCarthy."

"Freddie, how do you know this?"

"Sources. My ex-specialty."

"Fred!"

"Deal is, you're my best pal, my neighbor," he said, "so it's good to figure out what's what. One more question. Ever tell Ron? About—you know—the fall from grace? The pinko left-wing lapse?"

"You tell me, Freddie. Did I?"

His eyes brightened, impish. "No, sweetheart, I reckon you probably didn't. Not a bad place to start, though. Might clear the air about a whole bucketful of trouble. Second thoughts. Life cancer." Fred lay back in the grass, shading his eyes against the sun. He wore black boxer shorts, black socks, black tennis shoes. The skin on his shins and thighs looked mummified. "If it helps any—me, I was a Kennedy man. R.F.K. End the war, save the intestines."

Dorothy hunched forward, rocking, arms across her chest. She now felt the pressure of her nakedness. "I surrender," she said. "What's the point?"

"Points," Fred said lightly, "are mucho overrated. By the way, Ron's back. Patio. Binoculars."

"I can't look."

"Up to you. Anyway, about this harebrained Clean Gene business, I'm not gonna pry. Had your reasons. Maybe that college boy you almost ran off with. The one before Ron. What's his name?"

"Billy." Dorothy felt a quick, frightened tingle go through her thoughts. "Billy," she murmured.

"Yeah, yeah. Billy. Left him in the lurch, I'd say. Cold, cold Winnipeg. Draft dodger, sure, and I don't truck with that, but even so it's gotta be tough gettin' dumped for your best friend. Good pals, weren't they? Ron and Billy? No fun. Figure it had to eat at you, too, the way you changed horses in midstream. Missed that flight to Canada. Went for handsome. Went for conservative. No-risk marriage, so to speak. And then all these years down the road, yikes, along comes cancer, eight nodes, enough to give a gal the middle-age willies. Certain what-ifs pop up. Roads not taken. Grass-might've-been-greener poppycock."

"That was decades ago," Dorothy said.

"You bet," he said. "Yesterday, huh?"

Dorothy tightened her lips, straightened up. Recently, late at night, Dorothy had found herself reviewing history, picturing the face of Billy McMann, wondering if she'd made a terrible, cowardly, very stupid mistake three decades ago. She had chosen one man over another, one life over another, and now the cancer and the disfigurement and the shadow of a waiting grave had filled her nights with dreams of Billy, dreams of Winnipeg. She had loved Billy with her whole heart: that ponytail of his, those sharp blue eyes. But Dorothy was no flower child. She needed her comforts. She was a Goldwater babe, and proud of it, and running off to Canada with Billy McMann had never been a real option. She had made the sensible choice. Now, bare-chested and drunk and maimed, she tried to blink away Billy's face.

"I need to put something on," Dorothy said. "This instant."

"Oh, boy."

"Hand me those pants, Fred. And I don't appreciate the snooping." She covered herself with his stained chinos, tied the pant legs behind her neck. "Not funny. It's like you've been checking up on me. Had me followed or tracked or—what's the word?"

"Tailed," he said.

"That's it. And we were friends."

Fred clenched his jaw. "We are, darlin'. Can't get friendlier. Fact finding, that's probably more like it. Research, you could say."

"Whatever," Dorothy said. "Shame on you."

She began to rise, pushing hard, but it was as if her muscles had come loose from the bone. Too much lemonade, she reasoned, or too much stress, but either way she had the sensation of being fastened to the lawn by Fred Engelmann's water-clear gaze.

It was now 2:43 P.M., Saturday, July 19, 1997. Still hot, still sunny. A light breeze had come up. The two Volvos glistened in the driveway. Her boys were at camp. Her gardener had vanished. Her husband was back on the patio, pacing, a very nice man. Her left breast was gone. Dorothy Stier could not move and was not sure she wanted to.

ECORSE DAYS

The music of the drill press
is not music at all: steel
into steel, then the abrupt
crack of the bit and the stock
flawed. Quit or start again.

We're talking 1951,
the long summer that stretched
into October before
the autumn rains brought leaves
cascading down from the oak—

the only tree within miles—
the one thing spring greened outside
the loading dock of Leo's
Tool & Die as though to say, once
and for all, Life thrives here, too!

I heard the message and I
heard wrong. Every hour dulled there,
for every hour was the hour
just passed and the one to come
without rhythm or flavor.

What I made was what I made
the week before. We called it
money, we measured the hours
in dollars, all twenty-four
operators grinding in time.

—*Philip Levine*

"Yeah, shame on me," Fred Engelmann said. "Old habits."

"I'm shocked and I'm hurt," said Dorothy. Even speech was an effort. "You voted for a Kennedy?"

Fred nodded unhappily. "Don't tell Alice."

"Well, I won't, but you have to explain."

"R.F.K.? The fella had this—"

"No," she said. "The spying. I mean, God, I tell you everything anyway."

"Not quite everything," he said. The man seemed gleeful, plainly enjoying himself, but there was also a patient, expectant quality in the way he regarded her. After a second, he motioned at his swimming pool. "What say we invite Ron over? Take a dip, pry Alice out of bed, grill up some burgers? Might file off the tension."

"I'm leaving him," said Dorothy. "Maybe you didn't stumble across that little fact in your research."

"Oh, I did, I did," Fred said.

"Then you know. He won't come near me. Hideous, repulsive, freaky wife." She paused. "Is he watching?"

"Appears so, unless he's asleep behind those binoculars." Fred pulled off his shirt and tennis shoes and socks. "Come on, now, let's you and me hop in the pool. If I got this doped out right, Ron'll be showing up pronto."

"I can't move."

"Sure you can."

The man did his winking thing and took her by the wrist and helped her stand. She seemed to glide the ten or fifteen yards over to his pool.

"My pants," he said, and removed the chinos from her chest. "Expensive fuckers, no need to ruin 'em."

"Who *are* you?"

He chuckled and said, "Name's Freddie. U.S.M.C., retired."

The water was warm and lovely. Highland Park was a new place. Fred swam a few laps, Dorothy floated, and then the man paddled up beside her and said, "Eight nodes, that's a killer. Some gals make it. Not you, I'm afraid. I'll give it five years. Five years, two months, handful of days. Can't nail it down any tighter."

"Five?" Dorothy said.

"And two months."

"You seem sure."

"I am. Awful darn sure."

"Who are you?" she asked again. "God? Some sort of angel?"

Fred grinned and said, "Not exactly." He looked at her for what seemed a long while. "A neighbor. In the vicinity, so to speak. Let it go at that."

Dorothy looked at the bright suburban sky. She was on her back in the middle of the pool, pleased to be wet, pleased to be floating. Her wig floated beside her.

"Now, the thing is, we're talkin' five real good years," Fred said. "Way I see it, you won't be heading for Hong Kong. Not Duluth. Not Winnipeg, either. Two super kids, one fairly rock-ribbed husband. What I'd recommend, though, is you take what you took. The comfy route. Nice house, nice cars. Not so terrible." The man started to swim away, but then turned and treaded water. "No need to feel guilty, either. That old boyfriend you're dreamin' about. Billy. He's fine. He made it, too."

"Secret sources?" said Dorothy.

"Roger that. Here comes Ron."

Dorothy Stier took a breath, went under, came up again. It was Saturday, July 19, 1997, but no longer seemed to be. Dorothy hit the water with the heel of her hand. "Five years, what a pile of bull," she said. "Stick around, Freddie. I'll make it. Wait and see."

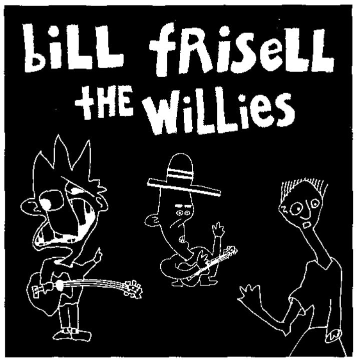
"Will do," Fred said. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER
From the Amherst (Mass.) Bulletin.

9:33 a.m. A man licking the locks on doorways of apartments on North Pleasant Street was gone when police got there.

BORDERS® Words on Music

Borders Jazz expert Jessica Sendra says:
"Jazz-guitarist Bill Frisell explores rural byways with a project that takes old-time roots melodies to previously unheard destinations in the company of two very modern bluegrass players."



NONESUCH

"★★★★ - Frisell's most committed homage to country music yet...devoted to making some indelible themes in the genre sound as good as they can in their own terms, illuminated by the guitarist's unique ear for chords."
The Guardian, London

The Willies features the guitarist with Danny Barnes on banjo, pump organ, and harmonica, and Keith Lowe on bass, performing traditional bluegrass and blues tunes plus eight originals.

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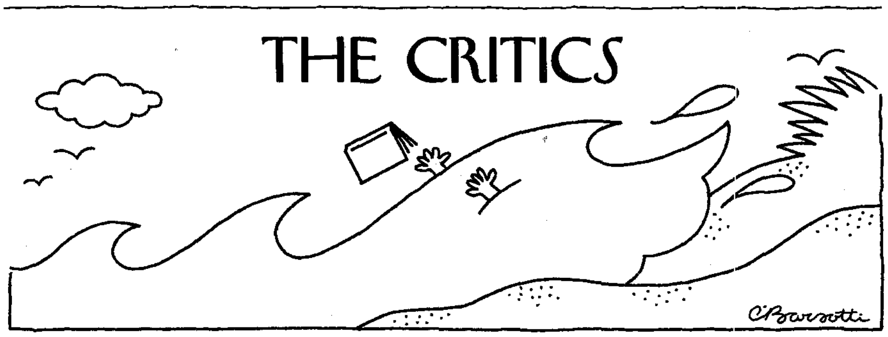


THE ART WORLD

NAKED PUNCH

Tate Britain celebrates Lucian Freud.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Lucian Freud, the subject of a huge retrospective at Tate Britain, in London, is living proof that national character still counts in art, globalization or no globalization. The musky realist painter is extremely English. He hails from Germany—but so does the Royal Family. (He arrived in 1933, at the age of eleven.) As a grandson of Sigmund Freud, he boasts a brilliant bloodline. Unlike people of lesser stock, whose behavior is what one would expect from them, Freud enjoys the distinction of being perennially, albeit mildly, scandalous. In his eightieth year, he continues to spend long hours scrutinizing unclothed flesh in his dilapidated studio, in Holland Park. His glumly pungent nudes have a challenging air, as if daring anyone to judge them less charitably than the proud, brooding artist judges himself. He is a notorious gambler, mostly on horses. His personality exudes flavorful amounts of grumpiness and dash. As if all that weren't enough, he paints well. He is a national treasure.

I find Freud's work hard to like and almost impossible not to admire. It constitutes a superb performance in a socially charged role. What this has to do with its artistic qualities is a question tangential to his prestige in England and among Anglophiles everywhere. One feels rather like a spoilsport—or an American, if that's not the same thing—for bringing it up.

Freud began his career, during London's cold-water wartime and postwar years, as a kind of modern-arty, melancholy Pierrot, channelling styles that were in vogue at the time. His early work at the Tate features Klee-like fantasies, Magrittean scenarios, displays of showily meticulous technique resembling Andrew Wyeth's, and melting pathos in pictures of downhearted young people with enormous, sad eyes. Much of this is better than it sounds, because it is keyed to a refined romantic fervor. There's a true adolescent ache in the young Freud, of a sort that we indulge readily enough in Picasso's Blue Period. Not that Freud illustrated the sufferings of an impoverished bohemia. He found sufficient pain in the existential states of relatively privileged characters who visibly do not know what to do with themselves. Their world suggests Salinger's, with poor plumbing. Though catchy, Freud's fledgling styles were brittle, relying on a second-rate gift for drawing that tilted toward caricature, the most English of graphic proclivities. Around 1960, he broke through to fluency, and even profundity, by concentrating his energies in paint for flesh's sake. His great theme became the incorrigibly unhappy animal beneath the skin.

Hardly a painterly prodigy, as his clotted early canvases confirm, Freud taught himself to break up planes of faces and bodies into patches of color, Cézanne fashion, and to knit them together with close-toned hues and continuous textures of juicy brushwork. He achieved a distinctive, notably tactile way of modelling. It's as if his figures were brought into being by cumulative soft and rough touches—a caress here, a grab there. Occasional buildups of strokes in certain passages, usually faces, advertise a protracted struggle to get the details right. His colors are glowering and earthy, with virtual odors to them. "Raw umber is to Freud as pink was to Matisse," the curator and critic Robert Storr once remarked. No painter alive is more exciting in areas a few inches square, where Freud's brush may nuzzle into the hollow of a hip or cradle the exact weight of a sagging breast. This is more than a matter of skill, because the action symbolically unites hand, eye, mind, and sexual feeling. Too grossly frank to be conventionally erotic, the nakedness of Freud's subjects nonetheless evokes states of crude, indiscriminate arousal: mere lust. This may explain the slightly prurient cast of the artist's celebrity. But what Freud does or doesn't do with his sitters is irrelevant to what he does as an artist.

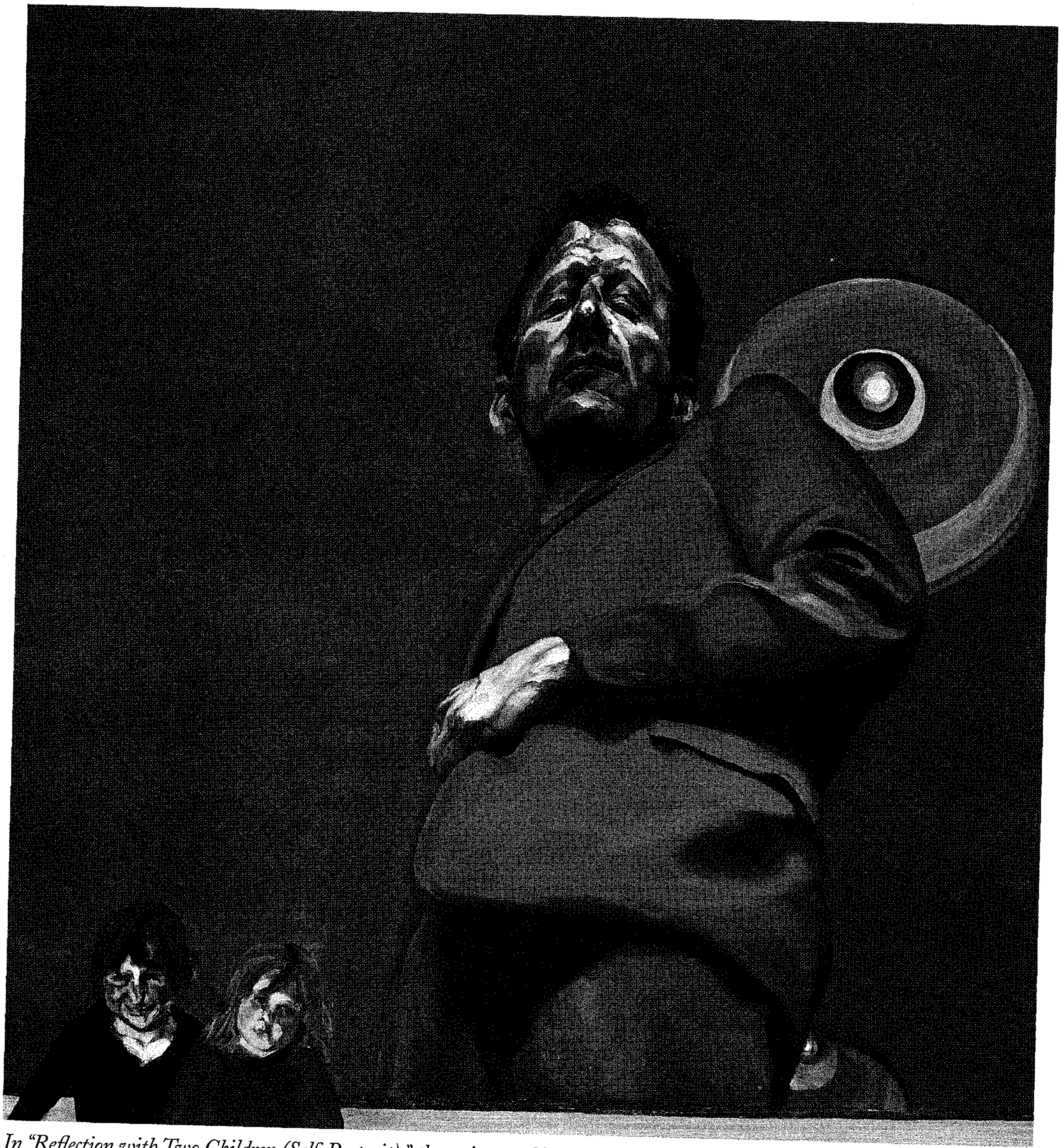
Freud's knack for caricatural likeness gives his subjects, who tend to be people he knows, rather than professional models, enough hints of an interior life to offset the impression of a meat rack. That these lives appear awfully grim surely owes something to the rigors of interminable posing, which would put anyone except a congenital exhibitionist in a foul temper. On rare occasions, Freud has painted outrageous showoffs, usually gay men. (He is assertively straight himself.) His paintings of Leigh Bowery, the late man-mountain Australian performance artist, are, psychologically, his most dramatic works. In these pictures, one compulsive performer faces off against another. The look in Bowery's eye is assessing, like a gladiator's, as he carefully flaunts his spectacular body. More generally—even in portraits of the artist's mother—Freud's gaze dismisses personal identities to home in on animal energy. His work suggests that having to be someone in particular is an onerous, perhaps tragic fate. (His grandfather's famous essay "Civilization and Its Discontents" comes to mind.) In his paintings, only the occasional dog seems at one with itself, as a sinewy, insouciantly ugly bundle of instinctive being.

Freud's self-portraits are pictures

MUSEO THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA, MADRID/COURTESY TATE

about the ordeal of ambition. They put the artist not only on view but on trial. Is he measuring up? In a bizarre painting from 1965, "Reflection with Two Children," he looms as a truculent but anxious giant, looking himself in the eye. The children—his daughters—appear as tiny, marginal images, suggesting remote concerns. (This is not a man whom you would ask for help around the house.) In a more recent self-portrait, "Painter Working, Reflection" (1993), he stands naked in his studio at night with a palette knife in hand, a beast at bay and possibly dangerous. It's a terrific painting, with a seething, half-despairing drive. It's as if he were discovering the figure of himself by repeatedly hitting it in the dark.

Enthralling as Freud's brushwork can be, his art goes numb when viewed from a distance of more than five feet or so—the remove at which paintings become pictures. I defy anyone to recall, as a vivid mental image, a whole composition by Freud, complete with objects and background. (For comparison, try the test on a Bonnard, a Balthus, or a Hopper. They deliver.) My own recollections of his paintings zoom in on figures or, as often as not, qualities or parts of figures. I think of a young woman's effulgent, all-over blondness or of Bowery's convex Hoover Dam of a back. Freud's friend and peer Francis Bacon, who focussed even more furiously on the figure, dealt



In "Reflection with Two Children (Self-Portrait)," the artist puts himself on trial and asks, How do I measure up?

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with the background problem by abstracting it in flat zones of uniform color. But Freud insists on sustaining the realist fiction of a world that can be entered. It's almost touching to watch him try to stay interested and expressive while filling in floorboards and windowsills. Though his pictorial stages are sometimes jazzed up with unusual viewing angles, they remain a construct of petrified conventions. He is apparently aware of this. In one large group portrait, he seems to mock his own static artifice with the present-tense detail of water flowing from the spigot of a sink. The notion of laboriously worked-up figures sharing the moment of a gurgling sound is comical, in a lugubrious kind of way.

For the most part, drama surrounds rather than suffuses Freud's work. This is part of what makes him so English, as is the prestige accorded an ultraconservative style that in any other culture would have had trouble being taken seriously. (Over here, Andrew Wyeth remains a regional reproof to all aspects of urbanity.) It is a truism to say that the English, at least in the Home Counties, around London, are congenitally theatrical, steeped in codes of behavior that both uphold the class system and counter its pernicious burdens with infinitely nuanced shades of ridicule. If you're not in on the game, it need take no account of you. But there's a special dispensation for sufficiently intriguing originals. Like Bacon's histrionically miserable homosexuality, Freud's Jewish, Continental, angst-ridden roots, abetted by his exalted pedigree, have played equally well in art journals and tabloids. What's required of a successful English artist, beyond being good enough, is that he make a "character" of himself. This goes as much for contemporary Y.B.A.s (the Young British Artists of swinging renown) like Damien Hirst as it did for Oscar Wilde, and in Freud's case it rises to something like sublimity.

Freud is not only the maker of his art but its protagonist, enacting mastery in more ways than one. He is less a painter than "the Painter," performing the rites of his medium in the sacristy of his studio. (He would no more spiff up that legendary, shabby space than a music-hall comedian would throw away his signature battered hat.) There's more than a trace of Picasso in his stand. The critic William Feaver, writing in the Tate's catalogue, tells how Freud, as a young man, was given the task of delivering a Picasso "Weeping Woman" to a show in Brighton: "He put it on the seat opposite him in the railway carriage and looked at nothing else the entire journey." Freud later recalled being mesmerized by Picasso's transformational magic, his ability "to make a face feel like a foot." He plainly imbibed much of the great man's attitude as well. Freud approaches his sitters with a muted version of the erotic fascination and domineering intent that Picasso brought to his portraits of Dora Maar and, really, to everything else he did. But the Spaniard's studio agon was fiercely playful when not playfully fierce. Ultimately, its force yields the autonomy and surprise of a grandly resolved art, in which the subject is consumed to a fine ash of remembrance. By contrast, Freud's wrestling with his models is rote and circular, like the repetitive imbroglios of a bad marriage. Still, even his flaws put him in good company.

In the United States, as in most of Europe, the issue of judging art according to the dancer or the dance long ago tipped decisively toward the latter. We feel that works of art should register in their own right, without anecdotal folderol. We grant authority to impersonal histories, principles, and theories. Compare Freud with his American near-contemporary Philip Pearlstein, another painter of large, unprettified nudes. Versed in New York School abstraction, Pearlstein creates pictures that are formally as tight as drums, and that declare themselves completely and strongly from any distance. But Pearlstein's paintings are cold and dry. Hot, moist Freuds are more fun, despite their incoherence. Standing close to them, I sometimes have the odd sense of passing through a looking glass—or is it a time machine?—from the art world that I know into one marked by lusher, smokier satisfactions. For a moment, it strikes me that this, precisely, is what I like. Then the mood evaporates. Still, the persistence of so seductive an affront to international rectitude deserves to be cherished. ♦

BOOKS

IRONISTS ABROAD

Disillusionment on the Danube in Arthur Phillips's first novel.

BY DANIEL MENDELSOHN

The names of Central European cities may not strike you as being all that amusing; still, the wittiest title in recent years could well be the one that Arthur Phillips has given to his début novel, "Prague" (Random House; $24.95). It's not that there's anything inherently sidesplitting about disaffected young expats who wander around Eastern Europe right after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is what Phillips's five main characters happen to be. (As the author himself slyly observes, his setup is "not without a powerful whiff of cliché.") Nor are you likely to consider this particular quintet of innocents abroad—four Americans and one Canadian—very funny: a more grimly self-conscious and hopelessly unself-aware gaggle of twenty-somethings would be hard to find in contemporary fiction, which is saying a lot. It's just that not a single page of "Prague" takes place in Prague. The story is set, instead, entirely in Budapest—that "god-forsaken paprika-stained Austrian test market," one glum resident dubs it, where would-be artistes and halfhearted corporate vultures from the West have flocked because the wealthier, cleaner, more picturesque Czech city is either too expensive or has already been exploited. "That's where real life is going on right now," John Price, a journalist and the novel's most introspective character, declares at one point. "Not here."

But "Prague" is less about place than about time. Or, rather, Time: in this rich meditation on post-ideological ennui, the young Cold War victors don't have real lives because they can't orient themselves properly to what Phillips calls "the rush of History." Much of the action centers on an ongoing attempt by one of the five principals, a slick Hungarian-American venture capitalist named Charles Gábor, to acquire the Horváth Press, a venerable and newly privatized publishing house once known as "The Memory of Our People." Like so many Americans, the Ohio-bred child of refugees believes himself to be free of the past; "Prague" makes it clear that such freedom comes at a high moral and cultural price. While Charles first seduces and then, inevitably, abandons the elderly, urbane Imre Horváth—a survivor of two world wars, of Nazis and Communists, but not of triumphant post-Cold War capitalism—his four friends roam around Budapest doing what people in expat novels have always done, which is to sit in cafés, gossip, have affairs, and feel hopelessly cut off from everything. "Why am I unhappy in the era and the place I was given?" Mark Payton, the Canadian, wonders.

Arthur Phillips

MICHAEL WELDON

Like some other recent big novels with large ambitions, this one has its fair share of narrative sleights-of-hand and postmodern gewgaws. (Not least, a history of Hungary in the form of a series of M.B.A.-exam essay questions.) But what's gratifying about "Prague" is that, beneath the up-to-the-minute cleverness, it's really an old-fashioned novel of ideas—one of those books in which the plot feels like allegory and each character stands for some grand concept. Charles Gábor, of course, functions nicely as a poster boy for the soullessness of American capitalism. Mark, a forlorn gay academic, is the voice of nostalgia; he's even writing a book about it. While everyone else is drinking coffee and getting laid, he's paralyzed by the thought that "a Central European capital in the opening weeks of its post-Communist era" might someday represent "someone's receding, cruelly unattainable golden age." John Price's brother, Scott, on the other hand, stands for the American dream of starting over: a blond stud, he travels the world putting as much distance as possible between himself and his unhappy childhood as a misfit in an olive-skinned Jewish family. And so on.

And yet Phillips lavishes so much detail on his characters that they are no less textured—no less human—for being so obviously symbolic. This is particularly true of John Price, who reminds us that the flip side of his brother's fantasy of having no past is an anguished yearning for "roots." When John meets Nádja, an old Hungarian pianist who regales him with stories of Austro-Hungarian spies and daring escapes from Communist thugs, he is so swept up in "the rush of History" that he becomes dangerously clueless about the present. Among other things, he fails to notice that the woman he's mad about—Emily Oliver, the American Ambassador's crisply efficient girl Friday—is a lesbian. Unfortunately, Emily, who's spent her life dutifully following in her military father's footsteps, hasn't noticed, either.

The contrast—with its echoes of James and Wharton and Turgenev—between Eastern worldliness and Western naïveté is one that Phillips knowingly evokes, even as he goes on to toy with it. (Poor Daisy Miller is poi-

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soned by continental sophistication, but when her spiritual descendants go abroad it's Europe that suffers.) This cultural conflict is used to suggest a more complex set of oppositions: between experience and narrative, between the things that happen to us and the stories we invent to explain them. You feel these tensions at play in Mark's obsessive attempt to identify a kind of ur-moment in the history of café-going, a moment before painters went to cafés simply "because that's what painters *do*"; in the roiling story of the publishing house of Horváth, which functions as an allegory for Hungary's tortured history (for generations, no one has been able to agree whether a famous Horváth ancestor fought for or against the Hapsburg oppressors); and in the Westerners' endless search for something that feels "real" to them. Phillips's expatriates are suffering from a sense of inauthenticity that doesn't seem to afflict their local counterparts; while they roost in cafés, wistfully seeking an *echt* Central European dining experience, and averting their eyes from the city's contemporary buildings, the Hungarians are enthusiastically lined up outside Budapest's first McDonald's.

Phillips's epigraph, a sardonic quote from Thomas Mann's "Lotte in Weimar," is about the end of the romantic age of "arms and épopées" and the advent of "a practical era"; despite his clear-eyed and decidedly postmodern consciousness of the dangers of nostalgia, there's little question about which the author of "Prague" prefers. (When John, who writes a column for an expat newspaper, interviews some American marines about what they would fight for, one answer he gets is "You mean, like, what are we paid?") Charles Gábor has a casually utilitarian—and, Phillips hints, deeply American—understanding of "identity": the fact that he buffs his Hungarian speech and manners only in order to charm Horváth out of his family business is just one indication of the extent to which the novel is about a conflict between historical morality and post-historical morality. Scott Price's wry wish for a "Master's Degree in Living for the Moment" may remind you how fatuous the naïve American faith in self-invention often is; the epic struggle between Horváth and Charles reminds you how tragic it can be.

These big ideas are conveyed in prose that is studied, even mannered; nonetheless, "Prague" often manages to be very funny. (Being in a crowded night club is "like passing through an animal's close, moist digestive tract, the thumps of the music like the thumps of its amplified, proximate heart.") And it's filled with the kind of gleeful neologisms—"fratultery," for a man's affair with his brother's girlfriend—that you'd expect of a five-time "Jeopardy!" champion, which Phillips is. In the end, however, this book leaves you with a pretty bleak picture of the citizenry produced by a culture that lives so determinedly in the present. Charles goes through life wanting to be "extraordinarily . . . something"; the one thing his parents' adopted land hasn't provided is a definition of that something.

Only John, the writer, who's so addicted to Nádja's narratives that he no longer cares if they're true, knows how you get a "real life"—from, that is to say, "history and suffering," the very things that American culture so energetically defends itself against. In an impassioned article, John writes, "We of the West have been spared certain tests, and there are those who thank God for the . . . apparently permanent commutation of that dreadful trial. But some of us, perhaps, ache for it." In their different ways, all Phillips's characters ache for something, without ever knowing what it is. The great sadness is that "it"—history and suffering, real life—is staring them in the face the whole time they're in Budapest; they just don't know how to recognize it. Their inability to do so is "Prague" 's final joke—one that's likely to leave you aching, too. ♦

From the Times.

ZHANG XUELIANG, 55, DIES; WARLORD AND HERO OF CHINA

Zhang Xueliang, a onetime warlord who in two turbulent weeks in 1936 helped turn the course of Chinese history—and then spent the next 55 years under house arrest, gradually and reluctantly becoming a national hero—died on Sunday in Honolulu, where he had been living in recent years. He was 100.

Ancient Chinese counting system.

BRIEFLY NOTED

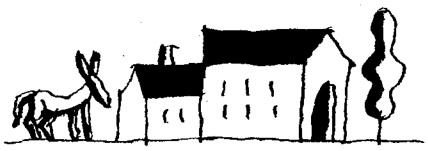
The Laying On of Hands, *by Alan Bennett (Picador; $15).* A celebrity-studded High Church funeral for a gifted masseur with (it turns out) catholic tastes; a lovelorn spinster who finds fulfillment at the hands of a podiatrist; and a henpecked husband at the bedside of his interminably dying father are the subjects of these three very funny stories by the British playwright. Bennett's genius is for the imploding situation in which a cleverly made house of cards shudders and comes down; the comments of his characters as they nimbly pick their way around the wreckage ("I suppose there's a word for what I'm doing," the spinster says, "but . . . I skirt around it") verge on aphorism.

A Big Life in Advertising, *by Mary Wells Lawrence (Knopf; $26).* In the nineteen-sixties, the stiff, information-heavy ads of the previous decade were buried beneath a wave of hip, daring TV commercials and print campaigns as the Wasps who had ruled Madison Avenue gave way to a more diverse crowd of copywriters and art directors. Lawrence was the head of the ad agency Wells Rich Greene during this period, and her account is true to the spirit of that revolution: insouciant, ebullient, and, above all, stylish. She provides a behind-the-scenes look at some of the best ad campaigns she was involved in, including "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz," "Flick your Bic," and "I Love New York," and, along with descriptions of day-to-day combat with clients and competitors, offers vivid sketches of life in the swinging sixties. The result is that most unusual of books—an entertaining business memoir.

Emperor of Japan, *by Donald Keene (Columbia; $39.50).* When Emperor Meiji ascended the throne, in 1867, Japan was a feudal, pre-industrial dictatorship, administered by sword-wielding samurai and closed off to foreigners. By the end of his reign, in 1912, the country had become a cosmopolitan constitutional monarchy and a military superpower, defeating Russia and China. Keene gracefully marshals evidence to illuminate this astonishing transformation by focussing on the earnest, dutiful Emperor, whose Confucian conscience obliged him to wear a patched uniform and to live in comfortless and shabby rooms. Unflinchingly describing such episodes as the Port Arthur massacre, Keene also shows how Meiji's exercises of martial strength did not preclude a sincere distaste for war.

A Life's Work, *by Rachel Cusk (Picador; $22).* In "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf wrote that the best writing is distinguished by its lack of complaint. Cusk, a British novelist, found after the birth of her first child that she was continuously sharing with someone else the room she was accustomed to occupying alone; six months into her daughter's first year, she handed her partner the baby and began writing down her particular experience of new motherhood before it escaped. Her account is extraordinary for its absence of polemic: she writes with the intelligence, wit, and keen eye for detail demanded by any kind of reporting, and the result is a book on the subject curiously unlike any other.

A Short History of the Shadow, *by Charles Wright (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $20).* "In a way, I feel I'm speaking *for* them" is how Wright described his relationship with "the people on the other side" in an interview in 1981. Twenty-one years and ten collections later, his wry, celebratory dirge drawls on: "Each year it happens this way, each year / Something dead comes back and lifts up its arms, / puts down its luggage / And says . . . / I bring you good news from the other world." Wright, Tennessean by birth and Italian by sensibility (he taught himself to write by translating Montale in the sixties), invokes Dante with an Appalachian tongue.



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A CRITIC AT LARGE

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The films of Max Ophuls.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The centenary of the birth of Max Ophuls has not been marked with quite the cascade of affection that his fans were hoping for. No fireworks glimmering over the East River, no white-tie dances in aid of the Distressed Cameramen's Association, no panoramic survey of his work. In Paris, of course, there have been several tributes, led by a retrospective at the Cinémathèque Française, but should you wish to pay your respects in this city, you must sneak down into the dungeon of Kim's or trek up to the Video Room and scrabble for old rental copies of "Madame de . . ." or "La Ronde." This state of affairs may be regrettable, even dishonorable, and yet something about the lack of hullabaloo seems a perfect fit; after all, the man himself, one of the masters of cinema, seemed almost Jeevesian in his blend of the efficient and the elusive—in his willingness to serve his chosen medium and then to fade from view. If you love movies, then Ophuls is an undisputed heavyweight; but there are times, or strings of lustrous moments, when his movies feel lighter than pearls.

He was born in Saarbrücken, Germany, in the spring of 1902. Saarbrücken lies on the border with France and has been claimed and reclaimed by both countries in the past century—an excellent seedbed, if your imagination happens to lean toward tales of fluid loyalty, of fond allegiances divided and subdivided by time. Ophuls spoke both German and French; he also directed a Dutch film and an Italian film, plus four English-language films during an eight-year stay—largely frustrated, sometimes deliciously fruitful—in America. He fled to Hollywood, like so many other migrants, because he was Jewish; Max Ophuls was originally Maximilian Oppenheimer, a name so dauntingly cool (starting with the Hapsburgs and ending with the atom bomb, like a long historical novel) that it all but confers a duty of genius on the newborn. Yet the young Max decided to change it, because his family, respectable folk in the textile business, disapproved of his craving for the theatre. If he was going to pursue the Muses, he would be obliged, if only on his passport, to become someone else.

Ophuls was an actor for several years, until he reached the revelatory moment, denied to so many in that august calling, of admitting that he wasn't very good at it. By way of compensation, he was offered the chance to direct; the year was 1923 and the place was Dortmund, in Germany, where he stayed long enough to direct as many as two hundred plays. On the strength of that success, he moved to the Burgtheater, in Vienna. That the city would become his staging post for a couple of years is of less consequence than the mythological status, the air of a sanctum both sacred and corrupting, that the place would acquire in the course of movies such as "Liebelei" (1933), "Letter from an Unknown Woman" (1948), and "La Ronde" (1950). Even when his stories unfold in other countries, they seem to be rooted in some Vienna of the imagination, at the unchanging turn of the last century: a place where the bindings of good conduct can shape you as gracefully as the bodice of a new dress, even if the pressure means that, as the day wears on, you find it impossible to breathe. Like all melancholics, Ophuls preferred the butt end of imperial power to the full flare; when he moved to the United States, to a new empire at once more ambitious and more enlightened than the Austro-Hungarian, he retained his taste for the glittering shadows, and for a climate of enervated hope. Look at "Caught," his 1949 tale of a dreamy girl (Barbara Bel Geddes) who marries a monster (Robert Ryan, in a barely concealed portrait of Howard Hughes), only to run away and catch the eye of a harassed doctor (James Mason). By now, the orchestras and flower sellers of old Vienna have long vanished, to make way for the heroine's cheap New York apartment, yet the snow and showers that fell in "Liebelei" and "Letter from an Unknown Woman" somehow linger in the raindrops that cling, like diamond dust, to the heavy black coat of Ryan when he comes to call.

Ophuls began his movie career in 1930, in Berlin, at the studios of U.F.A., the German film conglomerate where so many directors learned their trade. Every auteur has to start somewhere, and, in the case of Ophuls, somewhere meant a forty-minute comedy called "I'd Rather Have Cod-Liver Oil." There is a case for arguing that the remainder of his career was taken up with washing away the taste of that title; many of his female characters, in particular, appear to subsist on the principle that "I'd Rather Wear Mink." His earliest substantial hit, "Liebelei," was adapted from a play by Arthur Schnitzler—as was "La Ronde"—and it set in motion much that we think of as Ophulsian. There are the favored settings: the opera house, the army barracks, the bachelor pad. There are dances in cafés, and a climactic duel, although, as in "Madame de . . ." (1953) and "Letter from an Unknown Woman," we never see the kill; honor is served offstage, leaving the surviving loved ones to wonder if, after all, they were led to love too much. And, at the heart of "Liebelei," as of all the best Ophuls, there is a woman; here it is Christine (Magda Schneider, mother of Romy), a mouse lured out of her hole and into the passion trap. In the course of the movie, she falls twice: once for a cavalry officer and later to her death, through an open window, when their chance of happiness together is crushed by revelations from his former life.

The rest of the nineteen-thirties found Ophuls on the move: a wise precaution, given the political predations of the time, although restlessness seems to have flowed in his bloodstream. We cannot say where temperament ends and technique begins, but we can legitimately ask, perhaps, whether so mobile a camera—it glides through walls, from room to room, as Ophuls himself crossed national frontiers—could really have been wielded by a more settled soul. In 1938, he became a French citizen, and was duly called up for military

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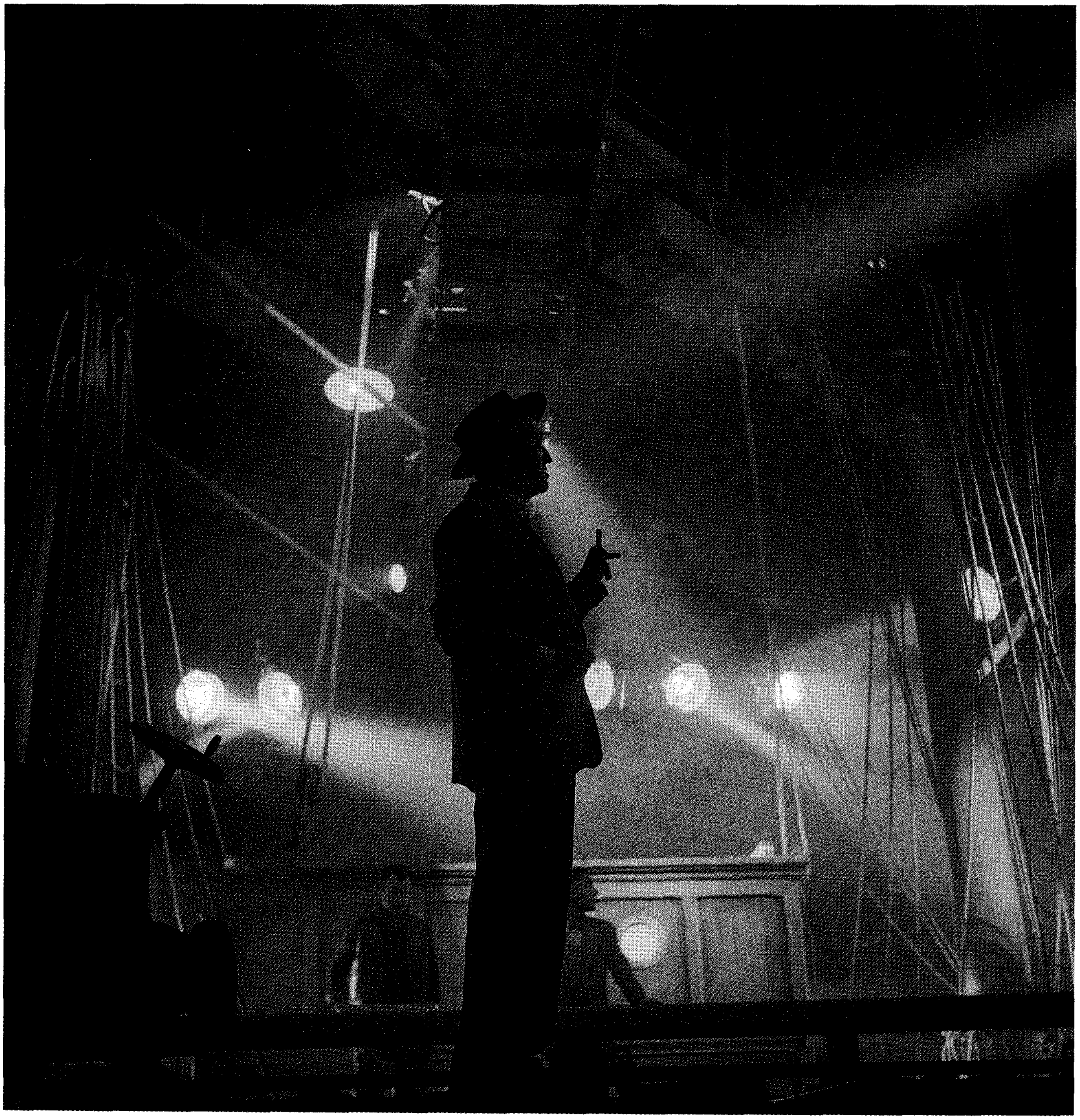


Ophuls directing "Lola Montès," in 1955. His radical insight and Old World elegance were probably just too much for Hollywood.

service the following year; his most effective contribution was a sequence of anti-Nazi broadcasts that he wrote and performed, in German, over the radio. (In a savage lullaby addressed to Adolf Hitler, he suggested that, were the Führer finding it hard to sleep, he should count not sheep but the human beings whom he had already led to the slaughter.) When France fell, Ophuls and his family—his wife, Hilde, whom he had married in 1926, and their son, Marcel, who would grow up to be a distinguished documentarist, the maker of "The Sorrow and the Pity"—fled to Switzerland, and from there to the United States. There were perils along the way, but, according to Ophuls, he "passed through them easily and with an athlete's routine."

The American record is something of a bad joke: Ophuls arrived in 1941 and did not direct a film until 1946. The bulk of the war years was spent either in thwarted projects or in spells of unemployment and penury; at the end of 1941, he had to borrow a hundred dollars from a friend. It was not until Preston Sturges, the most Europhile of Hollywood big shots, saw "Liebelei" that Ophuls's talents were seriously hawked around; he himself was little help, being a far from gregarious figure, who tended to gravitate to his own expatriate kind—Peter Lorre, Conrad Veidt, Kurt Weill, and other bundles of fun. The whole saga is wittily and exhaustively told by Lutz Bacher in his 1996 book, "Max Ophuls in the Hollywood Studios." What emerges from Bacher's study is the spectacle of an industry both intrigued and baffled by a new kid in town. (The credits of his American movies list someone called “Max Opuls.”) Studio heads grew itchy at the footage that came back from an Ophuls set; instead of the clipped, peremptory cuts that the system had always encouraged, and that were seen as the motor of speedy American narrative, this guy was hellbent on delivering unfractured shots that wound through and between the characters like a party-giver weaving courteously, all glance and eavesdrop, amid his invited guests. There was also a worrying paucity of star closeups, although that didn’t seem to bother the stars, who knew that the director’s exorbitant technical requests were made in good faith. James Mason, hired for “Caught” and again for “The Reckless Moment” (1949), became the ideal Ophuls hero, with a sexiness by turns sinister and kind, and the two men saw eye to eye, or, better still, long shot to long shot. Not that Mason, an actor-poet, coiled in the camera’s serpentine gaze, missed the funny side of things:

I think I know the reason why
Producers tend to make him cry.
Inevitably they demand
Some stationary set-ups, and
A shot that does not call for tracks
Is agony for poor dear Max
Who, separated from his dolly,
Is wrapped in deepest melancholy.
Once, when they took away his crane,
I thought he’d never smile again.

The American adventure ended in 1949; a reluctant flier, Ophuls sailed back to Europe in August of that year, leaving behind a Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., picture, “The Exile” (1947), which performed respectably, and three flops—“Letter from an Unknown Woman,” “Caught,” and “The Reckless Moment”—that are now considered masterworks, unprecedented compactings of *amour fou* and film noir. Hollywood would have to wait twenty-five years or so, for men like Robert Altman, before it could rediscover the visual freedom that was imported by Ophuls; yet he himself, an outsider and a novice, had peered into the shrines of American marriage and family and come upon people—women, mostly—who were never as free as they had dreamed. “The Reckless Moment,” which was remade last year as “The Deep End,” shows a Californian mother (Joan Bennett) fending off a blackmailer (Mason) who knows that her daughter was involved in a killing; but the promise in Mason’s dark eyes is so much more appealing than anything in her stifled home. Everyone in this picture is lusting to come clean. In retrospect, such a combination of radical insight and Old World elegance was probably just too much for Ophuls’s hosts. As the doctor in “Caught” says, admonishing the millionaire’s wife who works secretly in his surgery, “You’re so fancy you’re scaring people away.”

Victoria Roberts

“Method works, dear, but madness takes all.”

All of which makes the commercial failure of “Letter from an Unknown Woman” that much harder to unpick. There seemed to be nothing for Americans to wince at here, for the movie offered no comment on their current frustrations; instead, it ushered them back into a Vienna that posed no more threat than a pastry shop. Louis Jourdan plays a concert pianist, with Joan Fontaine as the trembling teen-ager in the apartment across the hall; the pair cross paths over many years, although the crossings never last more than a few hours. She manages to appear stainless, indeed saintly, despite bearing the maestro’s illegitimate child. The whole film is so exquisite, and its plaintiveness so infectious, that only afterward do you realize that it was, to be blunt, the story of a one-night stand. Was it that which offended public taste, or did audiences keen to shrug off the burden of the war years react badly to such louche fatalism, heavy with European fatigue? “I don’t mind so much being killed, but you know how hard it is for me to get up in the morning,” says Louis Jourdan, faced with the prospect of a duel at dawn. But Ophuls was trying to sell that brand of irony to people who were all too aware of the difference between an early death and an early start. At the *Times*, Bosley Crowther could barely force the movie down: “It will choke you with rhetoric and tommy-rot.” Otherwise known as style.

The last chapter of Ophuls’s life was the standard mixture of magnificence and frustration. According to François Truffaut, Ophuls kept in his inside jacket pocket a little slip of cardboard, on which he inscribed the films that he dreamed of creating: adaptations of Offenbach and Goethe, “Six Characters in Search of an Author,” and, most mouthwatering of all, Benjamin Constant's "Adolphe," a tale of erotic fascination—fidgety youth, older married woman—so patently doomed that only Ophuls could be trusted to handle it with care. None were ever made; nor was "The Duchess of Langeais," a Balzac story that was to herald the return to earth of Greta Garbo. Still, Ophuls did make four films in the early nineteen-fifties, and all four—"La Ronde," "Le Plaisir" (1952), "Madame de . . . ," and "Lola Montès" (1955)—happen to be accomplishments of genius. The first three are in French; the last, his only work in color, is a salad of languages and locations, performed by an international cast. Lola (Martine Carol) is a courtesan, first seen lounging with Franz Liszt, no less, in the back of what can only be described as a nineteenth-century Winnebago. From here she sleeps and chatters her way into the most desirable beds of her age, including that of the King of Bavaria, before winding up—in a hint of our own ravening rage for celebrity—as the headline act in a circus, borne aloft on a throne while the master of ceremonies (Peter Ustinov) compels the audience to hurl questions at her and, in the final, fading shot, to line up and touch her, as if she were about to become extinct. Maybe that prophecy was too strong for public consumption; maybe viewers were thrown by the movie's structure, as intricate as a clock, in which Lola's conquests—like those of her predecessor, the headlong heroine of Ophuls's "La Signora di Tutti" (1934), or, for that matter, those of Charles Foster Kane—are recounted in multiple flashback. Either way, "Lola Montès" was a wreck at the box office, and the producers took their knives to it, without Ophuls's consent, before releasing it again. He had long suffered from a weak heart, and these wounds to his art are generally agreed to have deepened the damage. He was taken ill before the première of a new production of "The Marriage of Figaro" which he was directing in Hamburg, and died there on March 26, 1957. He was fifty-four.

Why did audiences stay away from Ophuls? Why, even now, is the cinema's most tactful anatomist of love, its resident Stendhal, so far from being loved? Maybe all anatomists, however polite, are destined to unnerve; yet Ophuls was seldom as frosty as the nights in which his characters liked to take the air. If anything, the atmosphere in his movies is so congenial, and the brilliance so lightly worn, that we may not notice how acutely he is laying bare our illusions. Some of the deepest imprints that Ophuls leaves upon an audience are made by the most casual of gestures and by the most innocuous of scenes. I can remember the point, years ago, at which I gathered that he was not just someone to be reckoned with but an artist by whom it was a joy to be mystified. The movie is "Liebelei," the setting is a winter's night, and the young officer, Fritz (Wolfgang Liebeneiner, whom Ophuls cast, sight unseen, after hearing his voice on the telephone), is escorting Christine home to her door. We cannot hear their steps, which are muffled by snow and overlaid by the musical score. The two barely speak, yet this we know: at the start of that stroll they are acquaintances—they met only minutes before—and by the end of it they are in love. How *does* Ophuls do it? And how did he keep on repeating the trick, or summoning a similar magic, throughout his career?

For a start, he was no cynic; his films are rife with cynical men, but he himself seems to have kept both faith and pace with love. Ophuls characters fall for the wrong people, at the worst possible hour, but the fall itself is no crime; if anything, it is against a backdrop of lovelessness—a graying marriage, say, like a painted stage flat—that the real thing is most likely to emerge. What grips him, in other words, is the stirring of an underused heart. When Fritz meets Christine, he is trying to untangle himself from a thorny fling with a married woman; and Louise, the heroine of "Madame de . . . ," is married, with a harmless reputation as a practicing flirt, when she finds herself dragged into the quicksand of infatuation. As in "Liebelei," the lunge into love requires only a minimum of words; instead of a walk through whitened streets, Louise (we never learn her last name) and her beau—played by Danielle Darrieux and Vittorio De Sica, the director of "The Bicycle Thief"—are seen clasped in a dance, or, rather, in one dance after another. At first, they chat and smile; then the smiles weaken and die as they surrender to the seriousness of their case; their bodies grow imperceptibly closer; by the last dance, you can't prize them apart with a chisel. Needless to say, they are not alone; like all Ophulsian lovers, they are no more than two sides of a triangle. By the laws of romance, the third party should be the husband or the wife, stranded or humiliated by this unfortunate crush; in the case of "Madame de . . . ," it is the smiling spouse of Madame—a general and a gentleman, played by the incomparable Charles Boyer. But even he must stand aside, for this is Ophuls geometry, and what really completes the infernal trio is the camera.

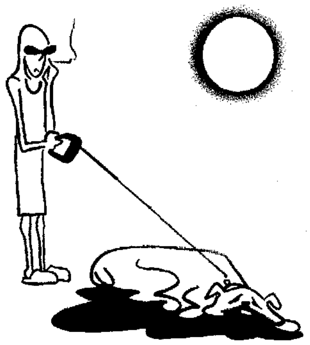
The Ophuls tracking shot is tough to describe and almost illicitly easy to watch. His films fear stasis and stolidity in the way that the diplomat lives in terror of broken protocol, or the rake is seized with dread at the prospect of a night alone. They answer to our basic, frequently camouflaged need to keep on moving, not to be wearied or ground down by a lumpen life. As Darrieux and De Sica waltz, Ophuls the onlooker waltzes around them, now following their steps, now watching their reflections; they are center stage, yet he keeps interrupting our view of them with all that intervenes—statues, pillars, potted plants, other couples. No other director has paid such homage to devotion, yet who else would dare to remind us of the frailty and vanity of the devout? It is not just time that menaces our capacity to love; it is the clutter of daily existence that refuses to make way for us or to respect our foolish belief that, in our rushes of bliss, we are all that truly matters on the planet. Darrieux and De Sica can't stop, but the musicians at the side of the room have had enough; they shrug into overcoats and leave, pausing only to light their cigars or snuff the candles that have illuminated the progress of love. Look behind our yearnings, Ophuls gently suggests, and what do you find? Smoke and mirrors.

Even when there are no public events, however, no masked balls or big tops, there is something in Ophuls that floods the grateful senses. His most private scenes—eat, drink, man, woman—tend to fill your eyes and ears with the high dignity of a Mass, or the élan of a small parade. If I could celebrate the Ophuls centenary in one evening, I would lay on a free public screening of "Le Plaisir"—one of his most insubstantial works, at first blush, and one of the least known. (A tip: Godard adored it.) In truth, it is a collection of three films, the best of which is "La Maison Tellier," the central panel of the triptych. Like Renoir's "Une Partie de Campagne," it is taken from Maupassant. "La Maison Tellier" is nothing, really: some froth about a houseful of hookers, the mainstay of a provincial town, going on a trip to the country. For some reason, though, it reduces me to rubble. In a train on the way to Normandy, one of the prostitutes, Rosa (Danielle Darrieux again), starts talking about her husband: "We drink champagne at every meal; he kisses my hands; he tells me things. Marvellous things." There is no such person, of course, yet we are slowly ushered toward her face, encouraged to hang on her words and make every effort to believe them. Later, in a village church, where the ladies of the night, festooned in finery, are attending a First Communion, the camera surveys a row of cherubim suspended in midair; following them down, it comes to rest on Rosa, who suddenly sinks her head forward, as if she were laying it on the block. She is seized with a gust of grief, as, gradually, is the whole congregation. The scene is an admission of sins, perhaps the most overwhelming ever committed to film; we are all of us lower than the angels, Ophuls is saying, but it is one prerogative of art to retrieve the sacred from the very heart of the profane.

What does that make Ophuls, in the end? I know what lured him on: first, the idea of the military man, his manners as buffed as his boots, both obeying and toying with the codes of his livelihood; second, the besotted woman—what used to be known as a silly goose—who is never permitted, thanks to a sympathetic camera, to shrink into a mere victim of circumstance. Of the character of Ophuls himself, however, I have no such grasp. I know that he was bug-eyed and orderly, that he lacked hair, and that he lunched on sandwiches and schnapps even on the Universal lot. There is a photograph of Ophuls coaching Joan Fontaine during the making of "Letter from an Unknown Woman"; in his thick-cut suit, he looks like the director not of a movie but of a venerable Swiss bank, consoling a beautiful and valued customer on the amusing depth of her overdraft. "A tender despot," Peter Ustinov labelled him, "a German giggler, who lived in his own particular stratosphere of subtlety, and who protected himself against the intrusion of philistines into his private world by a grotesque and wonderful perversity."

This comment raises more questions than it answers, although I am convinced by Ustinov's remark that Ophuls was "more than a little in love with those things his intelligence most disliked." Toward the end, he began to lodge himself, if only by proxy, in his films: the greatcoated swell (Anton Walbrook) who beckons us to join "La Ronde" ("I am the incarnation of your desire . . . your desire to know everything"); Charles Boyer, in "Madame de. . . ," never without that winning quarter smile, even in the antechambers of catastrophe, and keen to remind his wife that their Wildean marriage, like the film that enshrines it, "seems superficial only superficially"; and, last of all, Ustinov himself, resplendent in top hat and monocle, cracking his whip around Lola, as though she were a captive tiger, but so obviously, and so eternally, her slave. Even when he first comes to her apartment and invites her to join the circus, he can scarcely master his feelings. "*Vous êtes belle*," he murmurs in a low tone, shuffling his papers in her apartment, trying to be businesslike, "*terriblement belle . . .*"

Through the refraction of these figures, we catch our clearest sight of Max Ophuls: he was a man of the world. It is a breed that has all but disappeared from cinema, and the loss could hardly be more grievous; movies are a hothouse, and the temptation to stay inside and breathe the rot is forbiddingly strong. But some have preferred to function in the fresh air, and it shows in their films; Buñuel was a man of the world, as were Howard Hawks and Billy Wilder, and, as for John Ford and John Huston, proudly sporting the bruises of experience, they would surely be contemptuous of any filmmaker who knew nothing but film. The later auteurs could not be more retiring: Stanley Kubrick, Woody Allen, Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, George Lucas—a disparate group, yet all of them exiled or tucked away not by force of circumstance, as Ophuls was, but under the conditions of their own obsessiveness, or, at any rate, by the dimmed light of the screening room. Half of them are patently aroused by violence, but all of them are to some degree frightened by suffering, whereas the old masters took it as the hand that they, like the rest of us, were dealt. It may seem bizarre to claim Ophuls, a shy sort, as an artist of the worldly; after all, he was only sporadically a lyricist of the great outdoors. His camera, however, roamed the open spaces of the studio with ease, and so clearly and nimbly did he chart the rise and fall of love, as if watching the skies, that he devised a species of movie that is his alone: the tragedy that looks like a comedy. His work is jewelled but not precious, ornate but never overstuffed, and, where a film like "Eyes Wide Shut," for all its Ophulsian tracking shots, feels hilariously adrift of modern manners, the costume dramas of Ophuls himself seem free of anachronism; the skirmish of the sexes will never go out of date. "*Le bonheur n'est pas gai*," says the narrator in the closing seconds of "Le Plaisir," on a cruel beach, under a storm-blackened sky. The subtitles take a stab at the line: "Happiness is no lark." No, indeed; but Ophuls, in his wanderings, learned enough of the world to slip us that devastating news and to suggest, by way of remedy, that we face the music and dance. ♦



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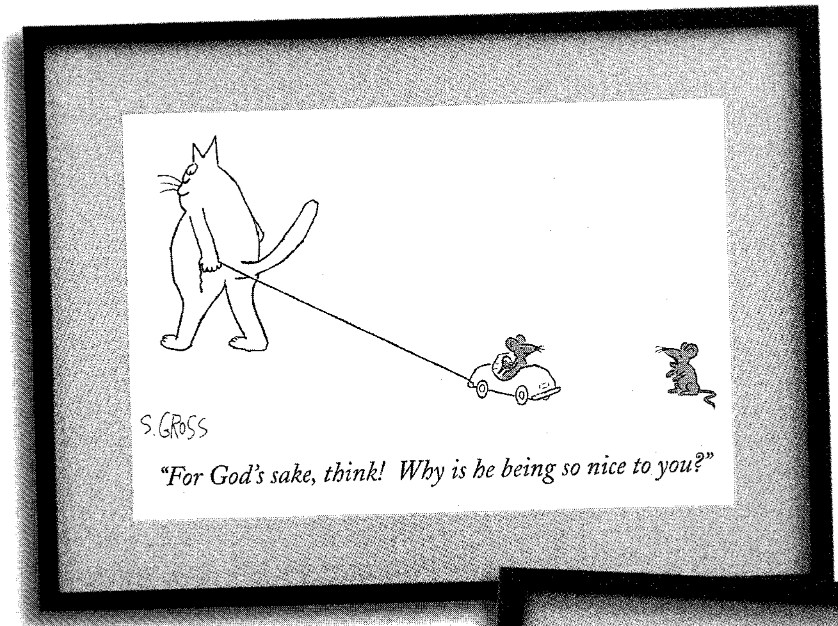

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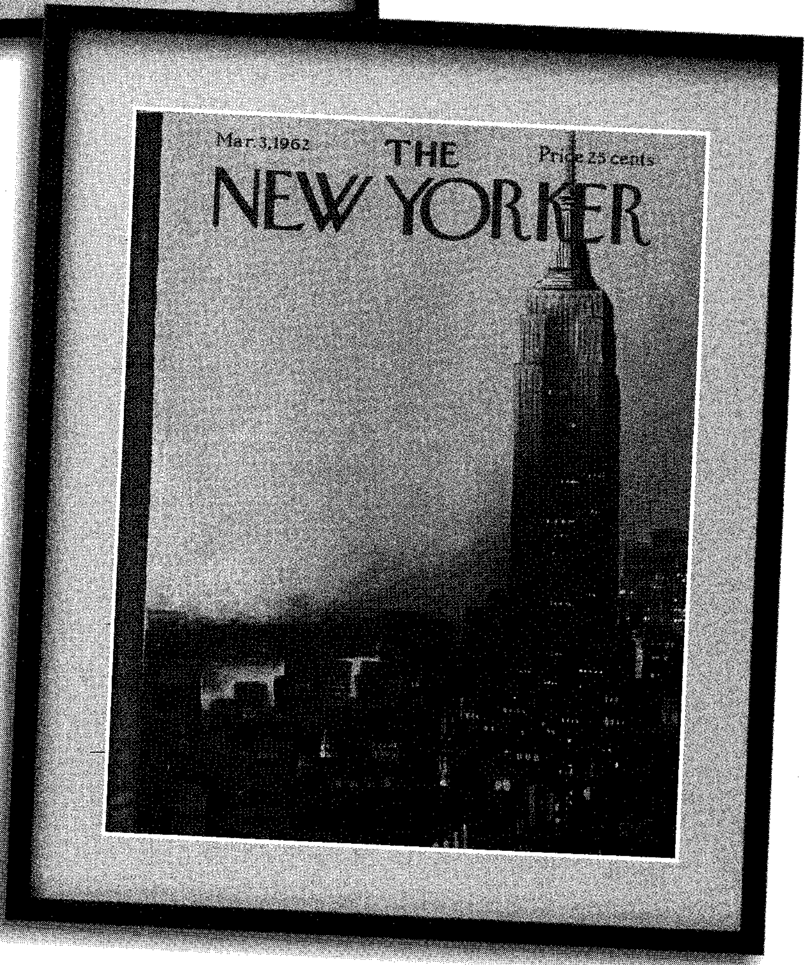

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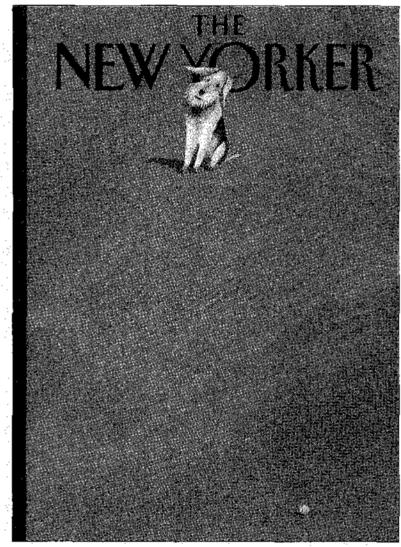

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

INVADERS

Defending the planet against aliens, and Florida against developers.

BY DAVID DENBY

“Men in Black II” has one moment of goofy, brilliant invention: There's a new alien threat in town, and Agent Jay (Will Smith), seeking help, has to retrieve his partner, Agent Kay (Tommy Lee Jones), who, at the end of the first movie, was neuralized and now works in the Truro, Massachusetts, post office. Got that? Yes, well, the trouble is that Agent Kay doesn't remember his former life as a defender of the planet from alien species. So Jay reminds him: Will Smith starts talking in nonsense syllables with a strong beat, and the other postal workers come back at him in the same style, removing their human faces and revealing turnip-headed, one-eyed alien creatures underneath. Agent Kay has been living among aliens for years; the shock restores him to his old function. Apart from this going-postal moment, and a nice song from Frank the Pug (a resident alien from the original, played by the same dog), “MIIB” is pretty much a disaster—repetitive beyond belief, and so busily inconsequential that it neuralizes your brain and leaves you with nothing to respond to. In truth, I'm no longer sure what planet Barry Sonnenfeld comes from. The director of the Addams Family movies and “Get Shorty” and the first “Men in Black” has not shown much interest in human life in such recent movies as “Wild Wild West” and “Big Trouble.” From the evidence in “MIIB,” Sonnenfeld must believe that the best part of the original was not the hip, mordant jokes that were a constant surprise but the conventionally junky sequence at the end in which Will Smith got smacked around a lot and doused in slime. “MIIB” is mostly dull physical comedy and special effects that are no longer fresh. One scene follows another with little variation; the movie is actually boring—one fights to stay awake. Lara Flynn Boyle turns up as Serleena, an evil Kylothian monster, and she emits many long tongues, but Boyle, though certainly something to look at (she's disguised as a Victoria's Secret model), doesn't compare as a comic device to Vincent D'Onofrio's sublimely awkward bug-monster in the original. In 1997, Sonnenfeld and his collaborators were saying, in effect, that fantasy and creature movies had lost their innocence—the stuff always looked fake, anyway—so why not turn the special effects into a joke? The idea that an alien might take the form of a kindly-looking Jewish store owner and that Sylvester Stallone came from another planet, and that, further, a secret agency, in imitation of square old cop movies and TV shows, might be devoted to policing such people, was the latest in sharp corporate-media irony. But some jokes can't be repeated; rather, they can *only* be repeated—they can't be developed. “MIIB” seems made not for hipsters but for very literal-minded children.

“You have no idea how hard it is to invent a tradition,” weeps Francine (Mary Steenburgen), a chamber-of-commerce official celebrating local history in a small Florida coastal town. Francine calls her fête Buccaneer Days, and it reaches its climax when a bearded pirate walks the plank and lands in a portable wading pool. One of the many civic-minded people in John Sayles's “Sunshine State,” Francine definitely has a problem. Tradition in Florida has been burned up like kudzu and then “invented” as the reliable kitsch of explorers, pirates, and alligators. Florida is America's bedraggled paradise, and its

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most fervent activity, of course, is the reshaping of nature through remorseless and unceasing development. Swinging a nine-iron, a real-estate tycoon (Alan King) recites to his cronies the familiar epic of turning swampland into a golf course. “Nature on a leash,” King calls his triumph. “Sunshine State,” which chronicles the attempt of real-estate interests to take over a couple of decrepit beach towns north of Jacksonville, acknowledges the threats that accompany offers to buy property and the bribing of local officials. But Sayles’s movie is not really an attack on corruption. And though “Sunshine State” has elements of nostalgia, it offers something tougher and more good-humored than the usual piety about lost innocence. By the end of “Sunshine State,” one gets the impression that the march of progress may not be an entirely bad thing. The fate of Americans, after all, is to pull things up by the roots, including themselves, and then move on. That’s our “tradition.”

Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith return, in Barry Sonnenfeld’s “Men in Black II.”

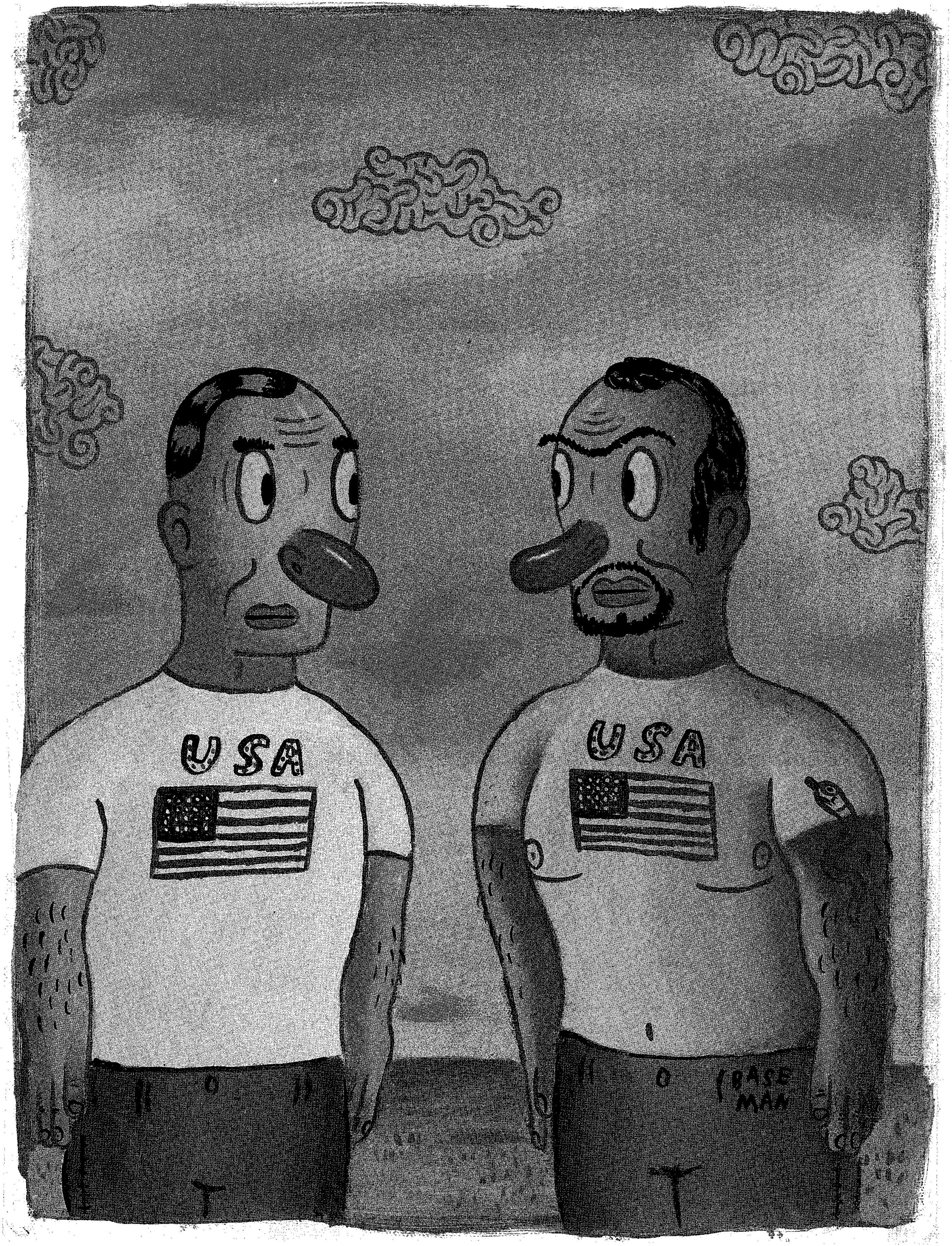
ERIC PALMA

I’ve never felt that John Sayles, the writer-director of many independent movies, was a natural filmmaker, or much of a dramatist, and I still don’t think so. But the leisurely, ruminative “Sunshine State” has some of the wittiest writing he’s ever done for the movies and some of the best acting he’s ever coaxed out of his performers, and the picture is a pleasant, if unexciting, experience. In such movies as “Matewan” (a miners’ strike) and “Lone Star” (Texas as legend), Sayles has been solemn, but no one in his right mind could be solemn about Florida. In its hapless disarray, the state almost invites satire. Sayles works in vignettes; he gives us a kaleidoscopic view of the anxious and the soreheaded, and he lets the language billow and swell. Alan King’s developer could be a rhapsode in ancient Greece reciting Homer at a meat-and-wine festival: ardor, not originality, is the point of his discourse. Except for King’s encomiums, however, the general mode is lamentation, the style rueful or bitterly eloquent. Edie Falco, in shorts and a halter top, has the best role of her career as Marly, one of those Americans who possess more intelligence than they can use in an unsatisfactory job. Marly makes acrid jokes that her listeners don’t always understand. She has a love affair going with a good-looking young golfer who’s patently too slow for her. In the fictional Delrona Beach, Marly runs a restaurant and a motel. Two sets of developers have an eye on the properties, which are owned by her parents—her half-blind dad (Ralph Waite), a testy, lovable reactionary, and her cultured mom (Jane Alexander), a drama teacher and theatre manager who does O’Neill in the sandy boondocks (she refers to herself as “the Sarah Bernhardt of Delrona Beach”). The circumstances these people find themselves in are not good enough for their talents, but they have no illusions, and you couldn’t call them losers.

Delrona Beach is tacky to begin with, and what replaces it might be nice, in a manicured, upscale way. The landscape designer Jack Meadows (Timothy Hutton) has a feeling for terrain—Frederick Law Olmsted is his idol. He knows he can’t simply do what he wants, however, and, as the young golfer departs and Marly takes up with the landscape designer, their affair depends on their both feeling a little defeated. The developers have all the energy and all the money, and everyone else has to find a niche for himself, including the former football star Flash Phillips (Tom Wright), a black man fronting for white real-estate interests and trying to persuade the middle-class black residents of nearby Lincoln Beach to sell out. Is the possible end of Lincoln Beach a tragedy? Perhaps not. The one man who has the entire picture of progress and decay in his head is the elderly Dr. Lloyd (Bill Cobbs), a realist who admits that the success of the civil-rights movement allowed blacks to work and shop in other communities. Many folks have simply left town—young people like Desirée (Angela Bassett), who got herself knocked up at fifteen and now returns with her doctor husband to make some sort of peace with her disapproving mother (Mary Alice). Sayles has always written fearlessly and well for black actors—he transcends race without denying race—and this may be his most detailed and accomplished work yet.

The many little scenes comment on one another, but Sayles is no master of the dynamic weave, like Robert Altman. No doubt he’s a gentler artist—more generous, too—but he has an abiding weakness: he doesn’t love or even trust the camera. In “Sunshine State,” he can’t find the means to capture visually what he wants to say about Florida—he says it through the characters’ speeches and attitudes. “Sunshine State” is pedestrian-looking, and never builds up much momentum (it moves horizontally, from one thing to another). After a while, you want more energy and emotion—for instance, you want Edie Falco and Tim Hutton to wake each other up, not just make wry remarks between drinks. “Sunshine State” is a shrugging, life-goes-on movie, a portrait of a restless, compromising country, the land of the half-satisfied. The movie is intelligent but leaves us half-satisfied, too. “Nature is overrated,” Alan King’s developer says, capturing the mood. “But we’ll miss it when it’s gone.” ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY GARY BASEMAN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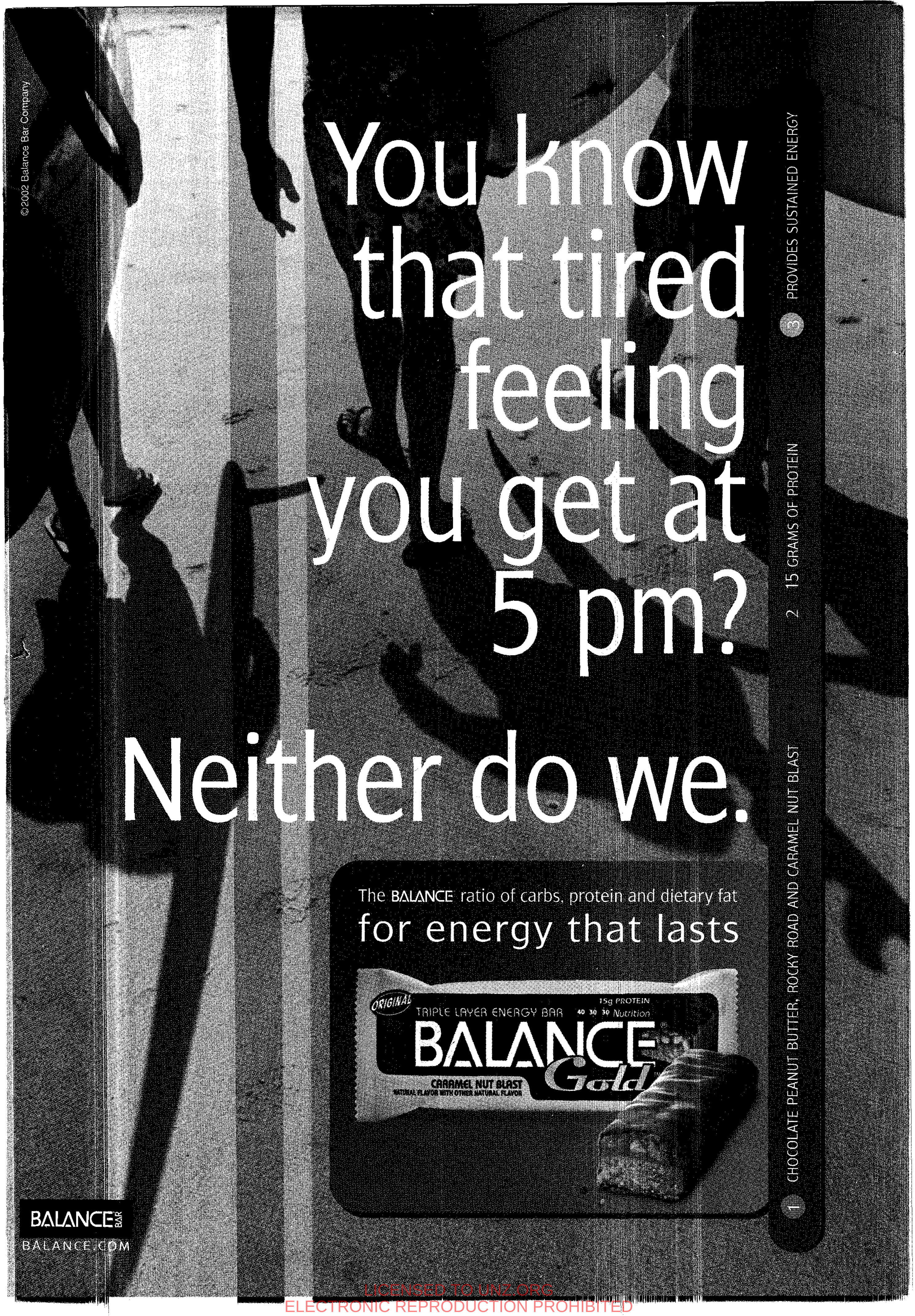
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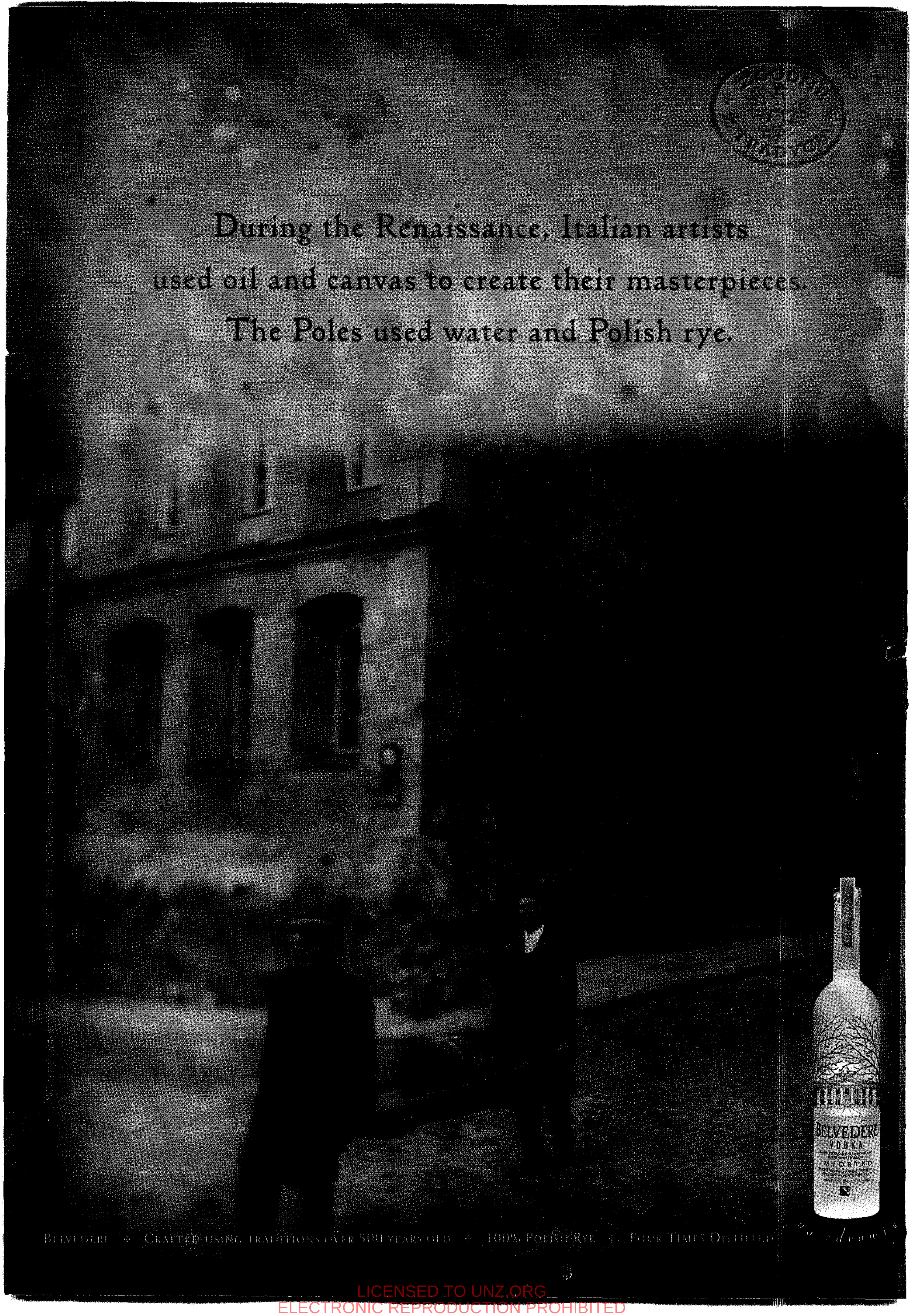

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